

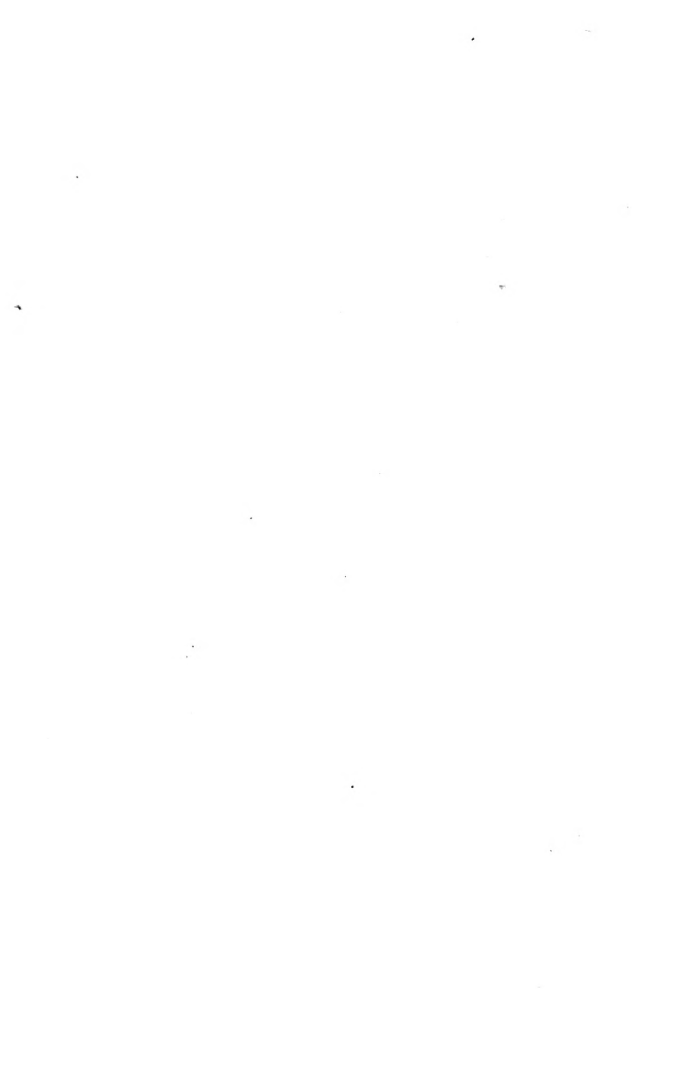




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No. 1







THE  
B I B L E - W O R K .

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VOL. IX.

Ezekiel — Malachi.

THE REVISED TEXT ; WITH CRITICAL EXPOSITION, AND COMMENTS SELECTED FROM THE CHOICEST,  
MOST ILLUMINATING AND HELPFUL THOUGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

PREPARED BY  
J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER, D.D.

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## THE AUTHOR'S CLOSING WORDS.

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IN these frank, closing words I may be allowed, for the first and only time, to speak directly in the first person.

In the Preface to the work (O. T., vol. 1, p. 6) I have briefly outlined the *motive* and the *aim* which constrained me at the outset of this undertaking. Now, at the close, I can affirm that this motive and aim have actuated me in all these eighteen years of almost unintermitted toil. And I can now also thankfully affirm that not only the origin and general inception of the plan, but its many diverse details have been so consciously impressed upon my thought as successive inspirations that throughout I have simply felt and toiled as one whose task had been assigned and gratefully accepted. That the toil has brought its own reward, the appreciative reader will understand ; while there has been a perpetual encouragement in the added conviction of helpful service to all who desire a larger and more complete knowledge of the Living Word. In the interest of the great body of English-reading Christians I have sought to furnish an intelligent reply to every reasonable inquiry pertaining to the entire text of the Bible. This, indeed, has been the one ever-present thought in the labor of all these years. For this great end the material of these seven thousand pages has been gathered from the matured thought of more than twelve hundred devout scholars, of the past and present, and has been chosen simply with reference to its intrinsic worth as explanatory and interpretative of the meaning of the Inspired Text. The late Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock accurately estimated the purpose and method of my entire work : " First of all, the exact sense of Scripture is carefully sought for, and then the innermost practical meaning of every passage is elucidated and enforced." And the late Donald Fraser, D.D., of London, justly said : " Although it makes no show of technical criticism, the expositions it furnishes proceed, as all interpretations worthy of attention must proceed, *on careful, critical study of the text.*"

No attempt has been made fully to discuss the mooted points of interpretation or of literary criticism. With but few exceptions the only form of antagonism to what may be regarded as error is a counter-statement of what is believed to be truth. One notable exception respects the theories of the self-styled " Higher Criticism." The main questions introduced by its leading advocates in Great Britain and America have been, in place, compactly but fairly presented and as fairly refuted throughout the Old Testament. The presentment and the refutation are mainly designed for the average student and teacher, and the intelligent reader, with the single motive of guarding their faith against the difficulties and doubts that naturally spring from the many complicated and confusing theories of the modern divisive school. I earnestly commend to every interested reader the thoughtful perusal of the many pages and paragraphs in which these theories are impartially treated.



And, in this place, I cannot refrain from a passing reference to certain impressions which have resulted from the large study and comparison that I have been constrained to make between the two opposed schools of criticism. 1. Among equally advanced English and American scholars there seems to be an immense preponderance in numbers of conservative criticism over that which may be reasonably characterized as destructive. 2. The same preponderance appears in the superior *quality of the personal judgment* of leading critics, a fact which has a vital bearing upon the final issue of the conflict. The superiority of conservative criticism in this quality of judgment is strongly emphasized by the definite and harmonious conclusions of one class and by an utter diversity of views and by constantly shifting and altogether unsettled conclusions of the other. 3. A further comparison and a like contrast is suggested by the spirit and method in which the discussion is conducted. On one side, there is modest and reverent carefulness, as dealing with divinely given words; on the other, a self-assertive boldness which seems to ignore the Divine source and element in the words. 4. But a far graver charge lies against the modern school of criticism. It is that from first to last, in its essential and discriminating points, it exalts the form and framework far above the spirit and substance of the Sacred Writings. It is that in all its theories and discussions it utterly eliminates and virtually rejects the great spiritual truths whose embodiment in History, Psalm and Prophecy constitutes the single aim, the sublime scope and the supreme end of the entire Old Testament Revelation.\*

\* Upon this vital point I cite paragraphs from Prof. James Robertson's "Early Religion of Israel," a book that will well repay its careful reader:

"The books of the Old Testament themselves, though subjected to the most harassing criticism, and characterized as 'spurious narratives of late date,' smile at all such criticism, and give forth with confidence their testimony to a faith which is independent of time, and indifferent to modes of literary composition. . . . The self-styled 'higher' criticism is indeed not high enough, or, we should perhaps more appropriately say, not deep enough for the problem before it. The strongest objection, in fact, to the theory 'as a whole' is, that it hardly at all touches the religion round which the whole history properly turns. . . . Take, for example, the treatment of the Book of Psalms now in vogue in the higher circles of criticism. One would have thought that if anywhere the inquirer into the history of religious thought and life would find valuable 'sources,' it would be in this collection of the sacred and national songs of Israel. But Wellhausen, for example, who boasts that he could understand the history of Israel without the Book of the Law, can also dispense with the Book of the Psalms. In the 'Index of passages discussed' appended to his 'History of Israel,' there is only one reference to one psalm (Ps. 73), which, too, of course, is placed very late in date. I think it a positive objection to the theory, not so much that it brings down the bulk of the psalms to post-exilic times, but that it is able to dispense with them as materials for a history of the older religion of Israel, and to relegate them to a time at which, according to its own showing, the religion had taken a more mechanical and formal phase. . . . Thus, by one stroke, the tongue of ancient Israel is struck dumb, as the pen is dashed from its hand; these artless lyrics are deprived of their spontaneity, and a great gulf is fixed between the few which a niggardly criticism admits to be of early date, and the full volume of devotional song which in many tones was

called forth by the shifting situations of olden times. Of course the hypothesis of a low religious stage in pre-exilic times demands this. . . . In the glowing periods of the earliest writing prophets, we have unmistakable evidence of the deep religiousness that suffused the minds of those who from the first guided the religious life of the nation. But all that side of the early religious history—and how much is that all!—might almost as well never have existed, for all that the modern historians make of it. The deep spirituality of Hosea, who stands like the Saviour of mankind weeping over Jerusalem, full of the very love of God; the strong ethical tone of Amos, and his enthusiasm for God; the lofty aspirations of Isaiah for righteousness, and his rapt visions of future glory—these surely are not isolated phenomena in the centuries that rolled over Israel when all that was best in the history was being achieved, but indicate a strong undercurrent of perennial religious life. Yet for all these, even taken in their isolation, how little sympathy do our modern critical historians exhibit! Whereas Ewald, in a past generation, came to the Old Testament books with a sympathetic spirit, and Delitzsch, in our own generation, with a piety pardonable in the circumstances heard in these prophetic voices the echo, thrown backward over the centuries, of the Gospel of Christ, we get nowadays some dry analysis of the 'idea' and the 'conception' of each prophet, and a grudging doling out of the attributes of might and holiness in the character of God, and reluctant admissions of nascent monotheism here and there; but we catch no fire from the prophetic words as they are weighed and measured out in the scales of the critics. These men, whose words are the fittest found even yet to express all that we can think loftiest of God, are represented as groping after the idea of one God, contending for the honor of a deity that is little better than a Chemosh or a Moloch; and when they cease to write and become men of action, they are set before us as moved by paltry motives of expediency, upholding the dignity of their order against the priesthood, or

As a final word, strongly emphasizing *the inestimable value of the Old Testament Scriptures*, I would plead for their continuous thoughtful reading in alternation and yet always in close connection with the writings of the New Testament. They are one in their Divine source, one in their great and vital themes, in their disclosures of God, in His nature, His working, His ways and His dealings with all His creatures; one also in their showing of man's heart and his doings; and one in their revelation of a Race Redemption procured and proffered through the self-offering of a Divine-human Redeemer. But an essential feature in the *method* of the inspired Revelation is its *historical* as well as progressive character. And this fact it is that gives the Old Testament a special value and helpfulness that cannot be overestimated, and that demands for it, equally with the New Testament, careful and thorough study; for, in very truth, its pages present one continuous series of living object-lessons, actually existent illustrations, on the one part, of God's character and purposes and the principles of His dealings with men, and, on the other, of man's nature and treatment of God and of his fellow-men. On the one side, the recorded history of every individual and of every people, especially and largely the story of Israel, supplies abundant evidence in every particular of the sweet yet awful truthfulness of Jehovah's self-disclosure to Moses (Ex. 34: 6, 7). On the other side, equally numerous and deeply affecting are its testimonies to the faithfulness of the Divine portraiture of man, as these are found in definite statements scattered throughout its pages.

And now, with a renewed expression of deep and fervent gratefulness that "to me this grace" of helpful service has been "given," I close my long-protracted task in the hopeful assurance and with the prayer that through the crowning favor of God these volumes may long continue to bring light and help with every reading of their pages.

J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER.

conspiring with them to bring about a masterly movement for the concentration of religious worship directly under their own supervision. Feasts, sacrifices, incomes of the clergy—in such things, and in the centralization of the worship at Jerusalem, the history of religion is made to consist; but the *heart* of the religion is hardly looked at, or rudely torn out of it.

"Let their literary analysis be ever so thorough, one who will read the Old Testament books as he would read any other ancient documents must remain convinced that justice is not done to them by a criticism which ignores their most characteristic element. The biblical theory says there was a course of history quite unprecedented, or certainly most extraordinary; the modern theory says that the history was nothing remarkable, but there was quite an unprecedented mode of imagining and writing it. . . . We ought gladly to welcome any help that comes to the aid of faith in such a God as the patriarchs and prophets are represented as making known—a God whose revelation of Himself has been advancing with brighter radiance, till it culminated in the manifestation of His Son Jesus Christ, who was the 'light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.' Such a faith as Old Testament prophets possessed has been the blessing and the guide of the best of mankind in their achievement of the best up till this hour; such a faith is more than ever need-

ed just at the present moment, to save the human race from losing respect for itself, and to rekindle hope and aspiration for the future."—*Jas. Robertson.*

I add two brief paragraphs: "Criticism cannot touch the vital heart of the Bible. So far as criticism is revolutionary and destructive, it is not scientific; and so far as it is scientific, it is perfectly harmless, and in the main purely conjectural. . . . There is the Bible—potent in the past, and potent now. There, in its records, lies the broad line of revelation, in law and psalm and prophecy, growing more and more luminous until the day dawns in Jesus Christ. It is all clear and consistent, and history has crystallized around it. The heart of the world beats in it. The energies that have shaped the advancing centuries are here brought to view. It can never be outgrown; and it can never be discredited. There is an actual history behind it. There is a deathless life within it. And these are driving it with irresistible momentum into the present and the coming years."—*A. J. F. Behrends.*

"To theological students I would give the advice, as the best safeguard against the danger of scepticism, to master first and last the contents of the Bible, and never to lose sight of its *spiritual truths, which are immeasurably more important than all the questions of lower and higher criticism.*"—*Philip Schaff.*

## EZEKIEL AND HIS PROPHECIES.

EZEKIEL, as the book which bears his name stands in our own and the Hebrew canon, is the first prophet who proclaims his message from the land of his captivity. The Book of Daniel opens with the third year of Jehoiachin, but Ezekiel begins with the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. Daniel, therefore, had probably preceded Ezekiel into exile, and undoubtedly outlived him, but they were in exile together, though far distant from each other. Ezekiel was of priestly family, the son of Buzi. As, however, the name of his father is not otherwise mentioned in Scripture, we know no more about him. Ezekiel was partly contemporary with Jeremiah and Daniel, but Jeremiah had begun to prophesy thirty-four years before Ezekiel, and continued to do so for some six or seven years after his first vision; and as Daniel lived till the third year of Cyrus (Dan. 10 : 1), he in all probability long survived Ezekiel. *Leathes.*

Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, the great prophet during the Babylonian captivity, was, like his predecessor Jeremiah, a priest. He was taken captive in the captivity of Jehoiachin, eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was a member of a community of Jewish exiles who settled on the banks of the Chebar, a "river" or stream of Babylonia. It was by this river "in the land of the Chaldeans" that God's message first reached him (1 : 3). His call took place "in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity," B.C. 595 (1 : 2), "in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month." P. S.

In the fifth year of the reign of Zedekiah, and therefore the fifth after the second deportation from Jerusalem, prophetic visions began to be sent to Ezekiel, on the banks of the Chebar. These visions spread over a considerable period. Among the earliest were those of the complete destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of Judaea. The treacherous conduct of the Egyptians, deserting the Jews in the extremities of their distress, furnished occasion for a blast against Pharaoh-hophra, whose destruction, with the desolation of Egypt, is also

foreseen and foretold. Tyre also, which had latterly been a bitter enemy of the Jews, was doomed to speedy destruction. But Ezekiel's later visions were full of mercy and peace. They not only foretold the restoration of the captive people, but also the far higher and richer mercies of the Gospel; and his sun, like that of Isaiah, went down pouring both on Jews and Gentiles the golden lustre of Messiah's reign. Mercy was thus graciously mingled with judgment; and while the people were faithfully reprov'd for their sins, the penitent and believing were encouraged to hope in the not very distant advent of better times. W. G. B.

Of the four greater prophets, two were priests and were contemporary. These were Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But while the former took an active part in the stirring circumstances of the times, and was subjected to much personal injury and wrong, the latter, already in the land of exile, regarded from afar and in personal quiet the strange events transacting in the land from which he had been taken, and took part in them only in mind and spirit. Hence less of the man appears in the prophecy of Ezekiel—less of personal history, of individual character, of human emotion. We know, in fact, very little about him.

Ezekiel was, in his exile, stationed in the northern part of Mesopotamia, at Tel Abib, on the banks of the river Chebar. His family also were with him. It should not escape notice, that at this place the exiles from Judah, of whom Ezekiel was one, would meet the earlier exiles of the Ten Tribes, some of whom had been stationed there. This fact gives increased emphasis to the frequency of the prophet's warnings, from the example of desolated Israel. It was not, however, until Ezekiel had been five years at Tel Abib, that he was called to the exercise of the prophetic office. The embassy that King Zedekiah sent at that date to Babylon, and the letter which Jeremiah sent by that embassy (chap. 29), falls in with his call, and may be regarded as connected with it. Then,

in a remarkable vision, he receives his commission to come forth among his people as a prophet, with a disclosure of the principal matters to be announced to them. Commencing from this time, the functions of the prophet appear before us in his book as forming a beautifully complete, a stately and harmonious whole. They fall into two grand divisions, of which the destruction of Jerusalem forms the turning-point (chaps. 1-24 and 25-48). During the period before this catastrophe, the prophet chiefly uses the language of rebuke and condemnation; afterward, of consolation and promise.

The influence which Ezekiel exercised upon his contemporaries is of the highest importance. As in the days of Elijah and Elisha, the prophets supplied, in the kingdom of Israel, the absence of a true sanctuary, and sought, as far as possible, to occupy the place of the lacking priests of Jehovah; so the priest Ezekiel, by virtue of his prophetic calling, afforded to the deserted exiles a living witness that the Lord had not abandoned them, and that even for them a sanctuary existed, in which they might perceive the gracious presence of God. The more imposing the public appearance of Ezekiel was, and the more desolate and troublous the time of his appearance, the more powerful must have been the influence he exercised. We see proof of this in those accounts which show that the people and their elders, even from the earliest period of his ministry, gathered around the prophet, and listened to his words. In the words of God to the prophet, it is implied that the people were accustomed, at appointed times, to come to Ezekiel, to sit before him, and to receive his instruction with reverence. He was considered as a public teacher, who appointed meetings in his house as at a public school, and there, before a crowded assembly, interpreted the Divine will. Nor was this influence transitory or confined to his own generation, but was one that continued, and was much more comprehensive. If the Book of Daniel be considered as having had much influence in the formation of the views of later Judaism, it belonged to Ezekiel to exercise an analogous influence during the period of the Exile. *Kitts*.

In reading Ezekiel it is always to be borne in mind that he was distant in *space* from the scenes he describes—*e.g.*, in chap. 24 he is bidden to name a particular day, which was found afterward to be the very day when the siege of Jerusalem began, he being then in the land of his captivity by the river Chebar. In like

manner, in chap. 8 he describes in detail the idolatrous abominations perpetrated in the Temple at Jerusalem, which he is shown in vision, though far away. The latest date given in the book is the twenty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, 527 B.C. (chap. 29 : 17). This is seventeen years later than the date of the first verse of the same chapter. The vision of the restored Temple (chap. 40) is dated in the twenty-fifth year.

We learn incidentally from chap. 24 : 18 that Ezekiel was married, and that his wife died in the ninth year of his exile, 590 B.C.; also from 3 : 24 : 8 : 1, that though in exile, he nevertheless had a house of his own. Probably, therefore, the condition of the captives, at all events in certain cases, was not an oppressive one; but its bitterness consisted in expatriation from the land of their fathers, which was itself intolerable to the Jew, with his highly developed and sensitive patriotic feelings. Of Ezekiel's later history nothing is known. There is every reason to believe that he died in exile, where it is evident that he was recognized as a prophet and held in honor by his fellow-countrymen, as we see by the fact of the elders of the nation often assembling themselves to receive his prophetic counsels and admonitions. *Leathes*.

Ezekiel is, among the prophets, what Michael Angelo is among painters and sculptors. Vast and colossal in his imagery, majestic in his diction, copious in fancy, he nevertheless often transcends in his ideas the powers of language, and becomes obscure and difficult to understand. This is well exemplified in the vision by which he was called to his office. *R. P. S.*

Ezekiel holds a place among sacred writers like that of Bach among musicians or of Chaucer among poets—less understood and appreciated by the general public, but the storehouse and inspiration of later authors—the musicians' musician, the poets' poet. *Ballentine*.

According to the prophet's own record of his life, his heart was not in the land of his exile, but "in the land of his nativity." His own home, where he dwelt with his wife, and guided the counsels of the small community of the Chebar, faded from his eyes. Across the rich garden of that fertile region, across the vast Euphrates, across the intervening desert, his spirit still yearned toward Jerusalem, still lived in the Temple courts, where once he had ministered. Though an exile, he was still one with his countrymen; and in the sense of that union, and in the strength of a mightier power than his own, the bounds of space and time were overleaped, and during the seven years that

elapsed before the city was overthrown, he lived absorbed in the prophetic sight of the things that were to be, and in the prophetic hearing of the words that were to be spoken, in this last crisis of his country's fate. *Stanley.*

The Lord began to fulfil His good word, given to the exiles through Jeremiah, by causing Ezekiel to appear in the midst of them, who raised his voice like a trumpet and showed to Israel his misdeeds; whose word, like a threshing machine, passed over all those sweet hopes and purposes and ground them to the dust; whose whole manifestations furnished the strongest proof that the Lord was still among His people; an energetic, gigantic nature, who was thereby suited effectually to counteract the Babylonish spirit of the time, which loved to manifest itself in violent, gigantic, and grotesque forms; one who stood alone, but was yet equal to a hundred of the scholars of the prophets. The extent of his influence appears from the fact that the oldest of the people were accustomed to assemble in his house in order to hear the words of the Lord through him—a sign of the public and formal acknowledgment of his spiritual dignity in the colony. *Hengstenberg.*

As inflexible as Jeremiah, and tenacious of his duty, Ezekiel was more stern and unflinching. To Jeremiah it was often pain and misery to obey God's commands, and his nature led him to brood over his own feelings and look into himself, while Ezekiel threw his whole heart into the struggle with an iron steadfastness that felt pleasure in the struggle itself. *R. P. S.*

The prophet is distinguished by uncommon strength and energy. We see in him an individuality naturally endowed with great intellectual strength, penetrated and sanctified by a higher power to which it is made subservient. The appearance of Ezekiel as an inspired messenger of God must have been among the most impressive of any of those who under the Old Testament dispensation spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The glow of Divine wrath, the holy majesty of Jehovah, the mighty rushing of the Spirit of the Lord, as the seer himself had seen and heard them, were reflected in his discourse. He opposed with abruptness and firmness the corrupt spirit of the age in which he lived. When he had to contend with a people of brazen brow and stiff neck, he also on his part is of unbending nature, opposing presumption with unwavering boldness, and denouncing abominable deeds with words of consuming fire. This glow of

discourse is united with a clear and constant prudence. The prophet never passes hastily from one subject to another, he occupies himself entirely with the one before him, embraces it with all his power, views it in all its aspects, and does not rest till he has completely exhausted it. Hence he often returns to the great leading thoughts that animate him. In these he lives and moves. Unceasingly he presents to the harped ears and hearts of the people what the necessity of the case requires. And to this union of perseverance and strength the great efficacy of his eloquence is to be ascribed. *Bibliotheca Sacra.*

His strong sense of responsibility produced in him a spirit of obedience; a firm, unflinching, and faithful obedience to every word of the Lord comes out as the constant habit of the prophet's life. With the simplicity of a child and the earnestness of a man, he did what he was bidden. That which, in relation to any human master, would have been degrading, became, in submission to a Divine Master, a principle of mental and moral elevation. He is an abject slave whose will is entirely subject to that of another man's; he only is free whose will is entirely subject to that of God. The grand lesson of this portion of Ezekiel's history is obedience to the Infinitely Wise and Good—obedience, even where it may seem fruitless; obedience in the minutest particulars, and the strangest service; obedience, though involving self-denial in our dearest affections, even to the very crucifixion of the heart. *J. Stoughton.*

#### HIS PROPHECIES.

The writings of Ezekiel are distinguished from those of the other prophets in this, that his prophecies are full of images, of comparisons, of allegories, of parables, of personifications, and of descriptions, in which the prophet depicts his objects with such abundance of details and richness of colors, as leave little or nothing for the imagination of the reader to supply. When he launches the thunders entrusted to his hand against the crimes and prevarications of an apostate people, it is always with a vehemence and a warmth of feeling which no other prophet equals. In the ardor with which he burns, the crimes which arrest his attention are represented in all their blackness and deformity, and his diction seems then to take the hideous hues of the vices which he censures. We owe to him the clearest account of the forms of idolatry among different nations, to be found in any one portion of the

Bible; the fullest and most interesting account of early commerce, and the productions of different countries, that exists in all ancient literature, and which to this day forms the basis of all historical speculation on the subject; and he has furnished us with a remarkable description of the usages of sepulture in nations far apart. All this admits of interesting corroborations from modern researches; and they cannot fail to suggest that Ezekiel was a man of cultivated mind and enlarged observation, who had noted, with a degree of interest unusual for a Jew in that age, the circumstances tending to illustrate the condition and sentiments of different nations, which he could ascertain by inquiry, which had been given to him by report, or which enforced and voluntary travel had brought under his personal notice. *Kitto*.

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel both speak of the fearful judgments on Ammon, Tyre, Edom, and Egypt, to which list Jeremiah adds Babylon and many others. The main objects of these prophecies seem to have been to assure the Jews that their own God shaped the destinies of all these heathen kingdoms, and that He had His own plans in mind beforehand, and, therefore, could predict them through His servants; but especially to impress them with a more deep and vivid sense of God's sure retribution on guilty nations for their national sins. This sense of certain retribution would be of the utmost moment in its bearings on their own case. II. C.

Though the voice of the prophet may have sounded back to the country which he had left, Ezekiel's special mission was to those among whom he dwelt. He had, in the first place, to convince them of God's utter abhorrence of idolatry, and of the sure and irrevocable doom of those who practised it, and thus to persuade his hearers entirely to cast out idols from their homes and from their hearts. He had to show that the Chaldeans were the instruments of God, and that therefore resistance to them was both hopeless and unlawful, and so teach his people to endure with patience the lot which their own sins had made inevitable. He had next to destroy their presumptuous confidence in external privileges, and so to open their eyes to a truer sense of the nature of the Divine promises, and, lastly, to raise their drooping hearts by unfolding to them the true character of the Divine government, and the end for which it was administered.

The Book of Ezekiel may be said in this respect to be the moral of the Captivity. For the Captivity was not simply a Divine judgment,

but a preparation for a better state, an awakening of higher hopes. The state of exile brought with it longings for and expectations of restoration. These longings and expectations it was Ezekiel's part to direct and satisfy. It was his to teach the progress of the kingdom of God from the first call of Abraham to the establishment of the kingdom of David, and to show that this most triumphant period of his people's history was but a shadow of still greater glory. B. C.

Ezekiel is emphatically the prophet of the moral significance of the Law and of personal responsibility. He is full of the subject in its definite shape. The crimes and transgressions of his people are moral crimes. The tremendous disasters of Israel are the direct result of gross rebellion against the moral law. The burden of his teaching is that the history of nations, whether in Tyre, or Egypt, or Jerusalem, is no chance accident; that their ruin is the natural and inevitable consequence of their disloyalty to righteousness and truth. *Church*.

One of the immediate effects of the Captivity was the reunion of the severed tribes of Israel. For although the place of Ezekiel's abode may not have been identical with that of the exiles of the Ten Tribes, still the exile of the Jews brought them into contact with their brethren of the earlier exile. The political reasons which had sundered them were at an end; a common lot begat sympathy in the sufferers; and those of the Ten Tribes who even in their separation had been conscious of a natural unity, and could not but recognize in the representative of David the true centre of union, would be naturally inclined to seek this unity in amalgamation with the exiles of Judah. Accordingly we find in Ezekiel the terms Judah and Israel applied indiscriminately to those among whom the prophet dwelt; and the sins of Israel, no less than those of Judah, are summed up in the reproof of his countrymen. All descendants of Abraham were again being drawn together as one people, and this was to be effected by the separated members gathering again around the legitimate centre of government and of worship, under the supremacy of Judah. This will account for the name of Israel being lost in that of Judah, for the decree of Cyrus being addressed to the fathers of Judah and Benjamin (Ezra 1:5), and for the people's returning under the name of *Jews*, while we find in much later days mention of members of other tribes (Luke 2:36). Paul also speaks of the *twelve tribes of Israel* (Acts 26:7). The time of cap-

tivity was the time of reunion. Ezekiel's mission was to the house of Israel, not only to those who came out with him from Jerusalem or Judah, but to those also of the stock whom he found residing in a foreign land, where they had been settled for more than one hundred years (37 : 16 and 48 : 1).

The period during which Ezekiel prophesied in Chaldea was signalized by the miserable reign of Zedekiah, ending in his imprisonment and death ; by the destruction of the Temple, the sack of Jerusalem, and the final deportation of its inhabitants ; by Gedaliah's short regency over the poor remnant left behind in the country, his treacherous murder, and the flight of the conspirators, conveying Jeremiah with them, into Egypt ; by Nebuchadnezzar's conquests in the neighboring countries, and especially his prolonged siege of Tyre.

The year in which Ezekiel delivered his prophecies against Egypt corresponds with the first year of the reign of Pharaoh-hophra, the Apries of Herodotus. The accession of this king to the Egyptian throne affected very materially the future of the kingdom of Judah. Since the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar the Jews had found the service of the Chaldeans a hard one, and were ready at any moment to rise and shake off the yoke. Zedekiah, though the creature of the Babylonian monarch, shared the burden, and could not but share the feelings of his subjects. Nor was the character of either people or king such that they were likely to be restrained by the repeated oaths of fidelity which they had made to Nebuchadnezzar. It was, however, clear that there was no hope of success from any combinations with small neighboring States enslaved like themselves. Egypt was the only power from which they could hope for effectual support. And Egypt had long been inactive. The power of Necho was broken at Carchemish (Jer. 46 : 2 ; 2 K. 24 : 7). Psammetichus II. (the Psammis of Herodotus), his son and successor, seems to have been a feeble prince ; he was, moreover, occupied in an Ethiopian war during part of his reign (which lasted only seven years), but Hophra was of a very different stamp. Herodotus tells us (ii. 161) that no former king of Egypt except his great-grandfather, Psammetichus, was so prosperous in his undertakings as Apries ; that he reigned twenty-five years, in the course of which he marched against Sidon and conducted an expedition by sea against the king of Tyre. It is clear that he was minded to recover the

ground which his grandfather and father had lost in Palestine and in Syria. Rumors of these designs had no doubt reached the Jews, both in Jerusalem and in captivity, and they were watching their opportunity to break with Babylon and ally themselves with Egypt. Against such alliance Ezekiel came forward to protest. He told his countrymen that their hopes of safety lay not in shaking off a yoke, which they could not do without the grossest perjury, but in repenting of their sins, and turning to the God of their fathers.

The fallacy of the hopes entertained by the Jews of deliverance through Egypt was soon made manifest. In the course of the final siege of Jerusalem Hophra attempted a diversion which proved unsuccessful. Nebuchadnezzar left the siege of Jerusalem to attack the Egyptians, who, if not defeated in battle (as Josephus says they were, Antiq. Jud., x. 10), were at least forced to retreat over the borders, and offered no further resistance to the captor of Jerusalem (Jer. 37 : 5-8). It was at this time that Ezekiel commenced the series of prophecies against Egypt (29-32), which were continued until the blow fell upon that country which ended in the ruin and deposition of Pharaoh-hophra. B. C.

The leading characteristics of Ezekiel's prophecies are, first, his use of visions ; secondly, his constant reference to the earlier writings of the Old Testament. The second of these characteristics is especially seen by his application of the Pentateuch. He represents and enforces its lessons, recognizing therein the word of God, that will make itself heard and obeyed. It is not merely the voice of a priest, imbued with the law which it was his profession to study. It is the voice of the Holy Spirit Himself, teaching us that the Law, which came from God, is ever just, wise, and holy, and preparing the way for the enlarged interpretation of the ancient testimonies, which our blessed Lord Himself afterward promulgated ; and instructing us to read, in the spirit of its commandments and of its ordinances, those moral truths and those mysterious doctrines upon which is founded and established the salvation of man. These ordinances were but the shell, containing within the kernels of eternal truth ; these were the shadows, not the substance ; and when the Spirit of God would reveal by the mouth of Ezekiel spiritual realities, He permitted the prophet to clothe them in those symbols with which he and his country were familiar. How far they were permitted

to interpret the symbols is uncertain ; but there is quite enough in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and in the declarations of the New, to convince us that such knowledge was not entirely withheld ; and the vision of the Temple, with which the book closes, difficult indeed in many points still, would be utterly strange and incomprehensible, were we to see in it no more than a material fabric, and in its service nothing beyond the reorganization of a Levitical priesthood and worship.

The opening visions of Ezekiel and of John can scarcely be otherwise than substantially identical. In each, the prominent object is a throne, and He that sitteth on it ; the throne is surrounded by ineffable brightness, lightnings flash forth from it, and a rainbow encircles it, while in constant attendance upon it are four, called by Ezekiel *living creatures*, by John *living ones*. In Ezekiel He who sits upon the throne is described as the *likeness or the appearance of a man* ; in John He is to *look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone*, and is addressed in adoration as *the Lord* (Rev. 4 : 11), being no doubt the same person described more fully in Rev. 1 as *like unto the Son of man*, and as *He that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore*. As there can be no doubt who is designated by John, we are led by an irresistible conclusion to recognize in the vision of Ezekiel the manifestation of the glory of God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, made man, *in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. But while the central object is the same, there are in the two visions marked differences. In John we have no *clouds from the north*, and no *firmament*. The *wheels*, which are so striking a feature in Ezekiel, are altogether wanting, the *eyes* being transferred to the bodies of the four beasts. The four differ considerably. While in Ezekiel the fourfold variety is common to all, so that each of the four is precisely similar to the others, in John the varieties are distributed, to one being given that of a *man*, to another that of a *lion*, and so forth. The peculiar motion of the four, all together moving to all quarters of the earth with no change in their relative positions, occurs not in John ; and, in short, while *unity* is a characteristic of Ezekiel's four, actuated by one spirit, so as to be called, not only *living creatures*, but the *living creature* (1 : 20), in John the four seem more like four persons offering, like the twenty-four elders, common adoration. These differences bear directly upon the subject of the two visions. The *cloud from the north* localizes the

vision to a spot upon the earth's surface. The *wheels* connect the chariot with the earth, the movements are to do service *on the earth*, the *firmament* is the medium between earth and heaven. The various particulars are parts of one whole, which represents the manifestations of the glory of God upon earth, and in all the creatures of the earth. But in John the scene is *heaven*. Visible creation is indeed represented, but it is translated to heaven. No services are required on earth, but the employment of all creation is to render perpetual worship to Him who is enthroned in glory, *having taken His manhood into God*.

The book forms a complete and harmonious whole. It is evident that the parts have been studiously arranged, and there can be no doubt that this was done by the prophet himself, who, at the same time, prefixed the dates to the several prophecies. The precision of these dates affords a clear proof that the prophecies were in the first instance orally delivered. Ezekiel very generally speaks of himself in the first person, and uses the historic past to describe the occurrence of each particular vision or communication from God. The prophecies were, no doubt, written down at the time of their delivery, and afterward, under the directions of the Holy Spirit, put together into one volume, to form a part of those Scriptures which God has bequeathed as a perpetual inheritance to His Church. B. C.

The burden of the Old Testament is to exhibit, first, the only living and true God as the Creator and Governor of the world, in His holiness, justice, and spontaneous love, unweariedly occupied with some effort of grace ; and, secondly, men in general, and the Jews in particular, as inexcusably wicked, swinishly treading under foot the pearls of privilege which Heaven again and again offers. The Old Testament closes with this vivid impression of a God infinitely glorious and gracious, but who has up to that point failed to try any remedy powerful enough for the inveterate backsliding of men. The servants sent to the vineyard all fail. Some are beaten, some are stoned. It remains only for God to send His Son. The strongest proofs of the inspiration of the Old Testament are the perfection of the Divine character portrayed and the profound view of human wickedness, both leading up to the expectation of One whom the love of God shall send to save His people from their sins. Was there ever a book so grand, so sad, so hopeful as the



Hebrew Scriptures? Ezekiel has all this to express.

The prophet's first task is to give to Israel and the world a fresh conception of the Divine majesty. This he does in the sublime vision of the cherubim chariot. Isaiah had done something of the same kind in his sixth chapter. But here at the outset the characteristics of the two authors are strikingly contrasted. Isaiah's description occupies but four or five verses, and it has the Miltonic indefiniteness. No detail of the seraphim is given, except that they have each six wings. Not a single fact about the throne is mentioned but its height. While the seraphim cry, Holy, holy, holy, the thresholds are moved and the house is filled with smoke. The marvel is that so much can be suggested while so little is told.

Ezekiel's method is wholly different. Two whole chapters and parts of others are crowded with minutiae. All that is great or strong or brilliant or beautiful or sublime in nature is combined. The four great representatives of the animal kingdom, the eagle, the ox, the lion, and man are there. There are startling combinations of faces, eyes, hands, feet and wings, reminding us of the winged bulls and other mythological figures of Assyria. There are the metals and jewels and crystals; burnished brass and glowing amber and terrific ice masses and beryl and sapphire. There is fire in all its forms of flame and coals and torches and lightning flashes. There is the splendor of the rainbow and the rush of the storm-wind, and wheels like whirlwinds, and the roar of the cataract or the breakers of the ocean. Out of all these elements a chariot is built for the Almighty. It is a sapphire throne encircled by a rainbow, borne aloft upon a pavement of crystal supported by four four-faced, four-winged cherubim, themselves moving on beryl wheels of awful height and full of eyes. Each wheel is composed of two, set at right angles, and is thus fitted to move straight forward toward any quarter of the heavens without turning the chariot. The whole glows with fiery brightness, dazzling coruscations flash from part to part, and lightnings dart abroad. As the chariot moves the rush of wings and the whirl of wheels are like the tumult of a host or the thunder of the surf. Isaiah presents and finishes his whole vision in one brief chapter of thirteen verses. Ezekiel keeps his before his readers by dramatic references through eleven long chapters, and in the overpowering light of it makes them look upon the sins of Israel.

We take it that the vision of the cherubim

chariot, in spite of its exactitude of details, is not to be regarded as anything more than a symbolical representation of God as enthroned over all the elements and powers and forces of creation, whether animate or inanimate. If such an attempt was to be made, no imagery could have been found more appropriate than that which Ezekiel has employed.

In contrast with the majesty of God, Ezekiel had to describe the apostasy of Israel. This, as we have seen, is one of the three chief burdens of the Old Testament. It is part of the proof of the absolute need that the world had of Christ. The completion of this demonstration was necessary to that "fulness of time" in which God should send His Son. The Old Testament, in so far as it touches man, is a record of utter failure.

The sins of Israel in Ezekiel's day were violence, bloodshed, unchastity, disobedience to parents, oppression, Sabbath-breaking, bribery, extortion, and in general an extraordinary hardness in wickedness. False prophets, profane priests and wolf like princes, all deceived and preyed upon a populace which shared their vices. Idolatry of all kinds, copied from the abominations of all the nations from Egypt to Assyria, a perfect syncretism of revolting rites, culminating in that last triumph of superstitious infatuation, child sacrifice, had displaced the worship of Israel's covenant God, Jehovah.

Ezekiel's view of the religious history of Israel is that which pervades the Scriptures from Deuteronomy down. It is just the opposite of that view which sees in the Hebrew religion an evolution of the religious genius of the people themselves. *Ballantine*.

*Analysis and Contents.* There are four main divisions of the book. 1. Chaps. 1-24, chiefly directed against the Israelites and specially the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the only exception is the discourse against the Ammonites in chap. 21: 28-32, or in the Heb. 21: 33-37. There is often a date given of the year, month and day, reckoning, as has been said, from Jehoiachin's captivity. In this section the people are reproached for their sins, idolatry, sun-worship, etc., which was carried on by the elders, especially Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan (8: 11). Zedekiah is reproached with his Egyptian alliance (17: 15, etc.), which is so far evidence of Ezekiel's acceptance of Jeremiah's prophetic authority, who had consistently discouraged this alliance with Egypt. The prophet threatens him with captivity (verse 20), as he had previously done with dying in the land without seeing it (12: 13). In 21: 25 he is also

severely threatened and virtually deposed in language which is at once a distinct reference to the prophecy of Jacob (Gen. 49 : 10), and the basis of the angelic announcement (Luke 1 : 12-33). Chap. 20 is that which so mysteriously foretells the dispersion among "the wilderness of the peoples," not "people," as A. V.; a dispersion which had already begun in the prophet's own day, but which was to be continued for long ages, till our own and our children's days possibly, to be followed (verse 41) by some signal manifestation of Divine action which should declare God's ways as plainly as the first return from captivity, which was distinctly promised (6 : 8, 9 : 22 : 16). Chap. 21 represents the king of Babylon as hesitating whether to go up against Jerusalem or Rabboth first. He decides for the former (verse 22), but the prophet assures the Ammonites that they shall not escape (verse 28). This accounts for the apparent interruption of a series of prophecies otherwise directed wholly against Israel. Chap. 22 declares the judgment of the "bloody city." Chap. 23 relates the idolatrous apostasy of Aholah, "her tent," and Aholibah, "my tent is in her," or of Israel (Samaria) and Judah (Jerusalem), under the image of two women thus named. Chap. 24 contains the death of the prophet's wife.

This ends the first division of the book; the second includes chaps. 25-32, which are chiefly prophecies against foreign nations; that in chap. 25 against the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Philistines is without date. Chaps. 26, 27 and 28 are against Tyre and Sidon, and are dated in the eleventh year. Chaps. 29-32 are against Egypt and Pathros, and dated in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth year, with the exception of 29 : 17, which is dated the twenty-seventh year, and is the latest in the whole book. It is probably inserted here for the sake of uniformity, and to bring together prophecies relating to the same subject. The prediction in verses 13-15 cannot be understood literally, but must be taken as showing that Egypt shall be dealt with somewhat after the analogy of Israel with a definite period of political extinction.

The third section extends from chap. 33 to chap. 39. Chap. 33 : 1-20 declares the office of a watchman; chap. 34 reproves the shepherds of Israel and promises to raise up one shepherd, even David. As it is utterly impossible that this could have been understood, or meant to be understood, literally, it is the more remarkable as a witness to the hope that still centred in the house of David, and the more sig-

nificant in relation to Christ. Chap. 35 relates to the ancient enmity of Edom, which broke out against Israel when the troubles of the Exile fell upon the nation, as is so often alluded to in Scripture, and threatens the desolation of the country. (Cf. 25 : 12-27; Ps. 137 : 7; Obadiah 10; Mal. 1 : 2, etc.) Chap. 36 continues the promise of God's care for Israel with that of the new heart and the outpoured spirit. Chap. 37 has the vision of the resurrection of the dry bones, and under the figure of the union of two sticks (verse 16) is prophesied the restored union of Israel under one head, "my servant David." Chaps. 38 and 39 are occupied with the promised overthrow of Gog and Magog. The latter name is found in Gen. 10 : 2; but Gog is only known elsewhere as the name of a Reubenite (1 Chron. 5 : 4). Both names are adopted by John (Rev. 20 : 8).

We now come to the last division of Ezekiel's prophecies, the most obscure and enigmatical of all—his vision and description of the restored Temple (chaps. 40-48), about which certain facts must be borne in mind. First, it is perfectly certain that the details of this vision were not accepted as the basis of the restored Temple. It is quite certain that the Jews who returned must have been acquainted with Ezekiel's prophecies and with this portion of his book. It is no less certain that when the Temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, he was guided by wholly different plans and directions—in fact, that he followed the main features of Solomon's Temple, that original edifice which many of the returning captives still remembered. This of itself is no slight evidence of the existence at that time of prescriptions and regulations which were then regarded as of higher authority even than Ezekiel's. It is hard to believe that the plans and directions which were followed in the building of the second Temple were themselves of no more ancient origin, if those of Ezekiel's vision were set aside in favor of them. But, secondly, it is no less clear that the arrangements of Ezekiel's vision were physically impossible to be complied with. For instance, the boundaries of the city and Temple in the vision are quite different from what they were actually, and the Temple was outside the city. The Temple was several miles north of the city, and the city several miles north of the site of Jerusalem; the natural boundaries of the western sea and the Jordan were too narrow by several miles to allow of the assignment made for the Temple and the priests and Levites.

The portions of the tribes were arranged in

total disregard of the allotments made by Joshua. Each tribe was to have a portion of equal width. The seven tribes of Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah were to be on the right of the Temple and its precincts—"the oblation;" and the five others, Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad, on the south. The restoration of animal sacrifices is provided for in the ordinances of the Temple in the prophet's vision. The Ark of the Covenant is not mentioned, and there is no high-priest; only the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are named, not Pentecost nor the Great Day of Atonement; but a new feast is instituted on the first and ninth days of the first month, when a solemn purification for the sanctuary was to take place for those who had sinned through error (45: 20).

It is remarkable that Ezekiel speaks in this chapter of a new functionary, whom he calls the prince, *nasi*, to whom a large portion of land east and west of the oblation for the priests and Levites is assigned, and whose duty it is to provide the sacrifices. Here again it is only possible to interpret these features spiritually. In later times the head of the Sanhedrim, who filled a very different office, was called by this name. The mediatorial function which is assigned to this personage in the vision of Ezekiel is very remarkable.

In the forty-seventh chapter we have the vision of the living waters which, flowing east-

ward from under the altar, rapidly become an impassable stream, which flows into the Dead Sea and makes it sweet. This is manifestly the original of John's vision in the last chapter of the Revelation. It is to be observed that all the latter chapters of Ezekiel, whatever may be their interpretation, are only to be understood on one assumption, that, namely, of the restoration of the Temple and the reoccupation of the land. When we bear in mind that the latest date in Ezekiel's prophecies was some three years before the release of Jehoiachin from prison, this expression of confident hope is the more remarkable, and is certain proof of the influence of Jeremiah's promise of the restoration. (Cf. Dan. 9: 2.)

Ezekiel's writings as a whole have probably commended themselves to a more limited circle of readers than those of Isaiah and Jeremiah, in consequence of the detailed accounts of his visions, which are at all times difficult to realize, but they nevertheless abound in passages of permanent and universal interest, and when regarded as a whole with reference to the time and conditions under which they were penned they fill a conspicuous and important part in the economy of revelation, and are of no inconsiderable value for the clear evidence they afford of the acquaintance with the law of Moses which the children of Israel must have carried with them into the land of their exile. *S. Leathes.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER I.

### VISION OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

1 : 1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and  
 2 I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king  
 3 Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the  
 4 son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord  
 5 was there upon him. And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a  
 6 great cloud, with a fire infolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the  
 7 midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. And out of the midst  
 8 thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they  
 9 had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four  
 10 wings. And their feet were straight feet and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a  
 11 calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And they had the hands  
 12 of a man under their wings on their four sides: and they four had their faces and their wings  
 13 thus; their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went  
 14 every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man;

and they four had the face of a lion on the right side ; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side ; they four had also the face of an eagle. And their faces and their wings were separate above ; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward : whither the spirit was to go, they went ; they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches ; it went up and down among the living creatures : and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces thereof. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl ; and they four had one likeness : and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides : they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were high and dreadful ; and they four had their rings full of eyes round about. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them ; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went ; thither was the spirit to go : and the wheels were lifted up beside them ; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went ; and when those stood, these stood ; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them : for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. And over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of a firmament, like the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other : every one had two which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of an host : when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice above the firmament that was over their heads : when they stood, they let down their wings. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone : and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward ; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

**Chap. I.** The remarkable vision recorded in this chapter served to introduce Ezekiel to his prophetic work. It was a species of theophany analogous to that made to Isaiah, as recorded in his sixth chapter, and to John (Rev. 1: 10-20). How admirably it was adapted to prepare him for his mission will be better seen when we have carefully studied its import and in some good measure comprehended its symbols. We shall find them richly significant.

II. C.

Walking by the river Chebar in deep meditation, probably upon the destinies of his country, the "hand of Jehovah" rested upon Ezekiel, and, closing the avenues of his mind to the ordinary impression of the senses, displayed to his trance-sight the most wonderful spectacle ever presented to mortal eyes. From the dark north a whirlwind appeared like a vast cloud, formed of blazing fire, shooting out rays

and tongues of flame on every side, and enclosing at its centre an appearance as of amber, or rather dark blue, like polished steel. From this dark centre there came forth four living beings, each four-sided, and having on each side four wings, making for each sixteen in all. Their feet were not like those of men, set at right angles to the leg, but came straight down and ended, like those of a calf, in a flat sole. On each side under their four wings they had human hands, and as thus each side was perfect with its face, four wings, and four hands, they needed not to turn, but faced every way, and moved ever straight onward. Each one apparently had on the right hand the faces of a man and of a lion, and on the left those of an ox and an eagle, signifying the union in each one of intelligence, courage, strength, and piercing vision, or spiritual insight. Their wings were so arranged that two on each side

were elevated, enclosing the face between them, while two covered the body, but they needed them not for motion. Wherever they willed to go, thither they went; and such was their brightness and the rapidity of their movements that they seemed to go hither and thither like the lightning flash.

Beneath these living beings were wheels bright as of beryl, shaped wheel within wheel, but each wheel of equal size, placed transversely to one another, so as to form globes. And the circles or tires of these wheels were full of eyes, the symbols of intelligence; and as each living creature had beneath it one of these globes of wheels, which moved ever with it as it willed, the whole represented the rapid intelligence with which God's ministers instantaneously do His behests. For these beings formed the throne of the Deity. Above their heads was an expanse of dazzling crystal, whence came a voice; and as they moved the prophet seemed to hear a mighty rushing of wings, like the sound of many waters, and of rolling thunder, and of the din of an army; but when the voice came from the expanse, all was still, and the living creatures drooped their wings. For the voice came forth from a throne of sapphire, circled around with the same deep blue color as had formed the centre of the cloud of whirlwind, while above it was the rainbow, and in the midst the Deity seated in human form, but as "the appearance of fire round about within." And the voice was Ezekiel's commission to speak in Jehovah's name to Israel's rebellious house.

When we contrast this vision, so intricate, so minute in its details, so complex, and withal so awful and mysterious, with the calm sublimity of the glorious spectacle which greeted Isaiah's eyes in the Temple, or with the peaceful simplicity of Jeremiah's imagery, we understand something of the reason which made St. Jerome characterize Ezekiel as "the ocean and labyrinth of God's mysteries," and which made the Rabbins forbid their pupils to read his writings till they were thirty years of age. Well might his name be called Ezekiel—that is, "the strength of God." R. P. S.

The very essence of the vision of the living creatures was that the Jews were taught to look for a new covenant, for a spiritual restoration. The vision of Ezekiel is not a dead and dying story, it lives still as the very charter of the Church of the future. Any work for Christ which shall be real, solid, abiding, must follow on the lines here marked out for us—mobility, spirituality, universality; these three ideas

must inspire our efforts, not to cling obstinately to the decayed anachronisms of the past, not to narrow our intellectual horizon, not to stunt our moral sympathies, but to absorb new truths, to gather new ideas, to adapt, to enlarge, to follow always the teaching of the Spirit. This is our duty as Christians; remembering meanwhile that there is the fixed centre from which our thoughts must spread and to which our hopes must converge—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. *Ep. Lightfoot.*

**1-3.** I find this "thirtieth year" in the new Chaldean epoch of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, which reckoned its years from the fall of Nineveh, B.C. 625. This is natural, and meets all the conditions of the case; for the very brevity of the allusion shows that the epoch must have been well known, and goes far to prove that it was the common epoch of the place, the people, and the age—in other words, that it was *Chaldean*. A prophecy written in Chaldea should naturally, first of all, connect itself with the current Chaldean epoch. So much deference to their national history would seem due to that people. Yet, since the prophecy was chiefly for the Jews, no more than this brief connecting link could be demanded. This would enable the Chaldeans to compare Jewish dates with their own, and thus locate each several message. For his common epoch Ezekiel would manifestly prefer the Jewish.

These captives are, of course, the Jewish exiles, located, as shown in the introduction, along the royal canal of Nebuchadnezzar, the great and *long river*, as the word Chebar without much doubt indicates. These "visions of God" are not merely visions given by God through His revealing Spirit, but visions *of God*, the special purpose of which was to reveal God Himself in certain great aspects of His providential agency. The "fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity" follows the Jewish epoch, dating from the captivity of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, and last king of Judah save one, his uncle Zedekiah. This captivity occurred B.C. 600. Hence both this epoch and the Chaldean locate this first vision of Ezekiel B.C. 595. (See 2 Chron. 36: 9, 10, and 2 K. 24: 1-16.) The words "came expressly" translate the usual emphatic Hebrew phrase which repeats the infinite absolute before the finite verb; "coming, it came"—*i.e.*, it certainly came; came with the clearest demonstrations of its actuality. "The hand of the Lord was there upon him," is the usual phrase to indicate the

special agency of the Divine Spirit in revealing Himself to His servants the prophets. (See other cases of its use in chap. 3: 14-22 and 37: 1, and in the same sense, though with various phrase, Jer. 1: 7, 10 and 20: 7.) H. C.

2. *The fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.* This was the thirteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign; for Jehoiachin was carried captive in the eighth (2 K. 24: 12). It was also the fifth year of the reign of Zedekiah in Jerusalem, and the sixth before the destruction of the city and the Temple. Ezekiel was made a captive with Jehoiachin, and he computes the succeeding parts of his prophecy from that event. W. Louth.

3. To speak comfort to those that feared God and trembled at His word, and humbled themselves under His mighty hand: "Let them know that though they are captives in Babylon, yet they have God nigh unto them; though they have not the place of the sanctuary to be their glorious high throne, they have the God of the sanctuary." Dr. Lightfoot observes: "Now that the Church is to be planted for a long time in another country, the Lord shows a glory in the midst of them, as He had done at their first constituting into a church in the wilderness, and out of a cloud and fire, as He had done there, He showed Himself, and from between living creatures, as from between the cherubims, He gives His oracles." H.

4. In the general import of this wonderful vision I suppose it to be a *symbolic representation of the movable base of the throne of God incarnate*—this incarnate God being considered as manifesting Himself in His providential government of our world. As here represented, His throne rests on a lofty, magnificent platform or solid floor, which floor itself reposes on the bodies and wings of "the living creatures" that are so graphically portrayed in this vision. The whole representation contemplates the varied agencies of God's providence as combining the utmost energy, wisdom, celerity, efficiency and grandeur, and is designed to show how He moves among the nations of men, lifting up and casting down at His will, scourging for sin and purifying by discipline, evermore just and righteous, and making His movements conspire to the exalted and worthy ends of His own glory and of human salvation. The vision opens with surpassing grandeur. A whirlwind rolls up from the north with a great cloud and a fire which perpetually *takes hold of itself* (so the Hebrew), making one vast, continuous sheet of flame. A brightness invests the whole, of

the color of "amber," or, as many modern critics prefer, of "burnished brass." All the ideas of that age seem to have located the home of the gods in the north—a sentiment due perhaps to the Aurora Borealis, which they seem to have thought of as the occasional illumination of the palace halls of the gods. Thus Isaiah (14: 13) makes his proud Lucifer (the great monarch of Babylon) say, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, *in the sides of the north.*" Perhaps it was with some reference to those ideas that this magnificent vision of Jehovah's moving throne comes forth from the north. H. C.

*Out of the north.* It was frequently foretold that the Divine judgments should proceed *from the north* (Jer. 1: 14; 4: 6), because it was from the north that the Assyrian conquerors came upon the Holy Land, and it may be that for this reason the *whirlwind* proceeded *out of the north*, for the vision, though seen in Chaldea, had reference to Jerusalem, and the seer is to contemplate judgment as it is coming upon the Holy Land. But we observe in the vision of Zechariah that the horses *go toward the north* (Zech. 6: 8). Mount Zion and the Temple were *on the sides of the north* (Ps. 48: 2 and Isa. 14: 13). Thus *the north* was felt by the Jews to be the peculiar seat of the power of Jehovah. Further, the high mountain range of Lebanon that closed in the Holy Land on the north naturally connected to the inhabitants of that country the northern region with the idea of height reaching to heaven, from which such a vision as this would probably come. B. C.

5-9. Now there came forth from the blaze of this effulgence what seemed like four living creatures in whom the human form predominates. Yet each one had four faces and also four wings. Their feet, moreover, were not those of a man, but of a calf or ox, yet sparkling with radiance like that of burnished brass. They had also the hand of a man under their wings. Two of these wings, making one pair, were joined together. Remarkably they made no turn in their movements, but went in straight lines, evermore straight forward. Probably this fact takes its significance from that law of mind which associates moral perversity with turning from a right line. The path of right and duty is thought of as being straight, but never crooked. God's providential agencies are evermore true and righteous altogether. It may indicate that in both discipline and retribution God moves straight on to His purposed end. The symbol of the calf or ox may have

a place here to indicate the solid, massive strength requisite to support so vast a structure as the throne of the Almighty. The reader will note that many of these symbols appeared to the Jews in actual life in the vast "molten sea" connected with Solomon's Temple. This sea stood on twelve oxen, and, moreover, had in its ornamental work sculptured lions, oxen and cherubim, coupled also with wheels, as in this vision of Ezekiel. (See I K. 7 : 23-33.) In some respects, therefore, this grouping of symbols was Hebraic, while in others it was Chaldean. The grouping of diverse animal figures in one nondescript symbol is very common, as above shown, in the Chaldean monuments of that age. H. C.

9. That, whatever service they went about, they went every one straight forward (verses 9, 12), which intimates : First, that they sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and had a single eye to that in all they did ; their going straight forward supposes that they looked straight forward, and never had any sinister intentions in what they did. And if thus our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light ; the singleness of the eye is the sincerity of the heart. Secondly, that they were intent upon the service they were employed in, and did it with a close application of mind ; they went forward with their work ; for what their hand found to do, they did it with all their might, and did not loiter in it. Thirdly, that they were unanims in it ; they went straight forward, every one about his own work ; they did not thwart or jostle one another, did not stand in one another's light, in one another's way. Fourthly, that they perfectly understood their business, and were thoroughly apprised of it, so that they needed not to stand still, to pause or hesitate, but they pursued their work with readiness, as those that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. Fifthly, they were steady and constant in their work ; they did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece with themselves ; they moved in a direct line, and so went the nearest way to work in all they did, and lost no time. When we go straight, we go forward ; when we serve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work. H.

10-12. This account of the location of the several faces is not quite explicit, but there can scarcely be a doubt that these four diverse faces looked each in its several direction, the human face in front, the lion face to the right, the face like the ox to the left, and that of the eagle backward to the rear. Of their four wings,

two were joined and stretched upward, while the other two fell and covered their bodies. Somewhat like this were the wings of the cherubim as seen by Isaiah (chap. 6 : 2). They had each six wings : one pair covering the face, one the feet, and the other used for flight. Here again we may note that all movement is straight forward, with no turning. They go as the spirit in them impels ; this whole representation being designed to show that the magnificent agencies of God's universal providence are everywhere and forevermore permeated and controlled by His own ever-present will—the one Infinite Mind guiding and ruling all.

13, 14. To heighten the grandeur of this magnificent portrayal, these living creatures now seem to have the appearance of coals of fire that burn like lamps. One clause seems to say that this fire shoots and darts among these living creatures—a fire invested with a glorious radiance out of which lightnings flashed ; while another clause has it that the living creatures themselves ran and returned like flashes of lightning. Probably both were seen in the vision. How grand and sublime must that scene have been !

15-17. Wheels are an expressive symbol of power and rapid motion. As to the number of wheels in this combination of symbols, verse 15 seems to indicate but one ; but verses 16 and 18 both speak of four, and so also does the co-ordinate description in chap. 10 : 9, 10. These wheels were sparkling and brilliant, shining like polished gems. But the most remarkable feature was their combination, said to be "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." According to this description, they might be concentric and in the same plane, or they might be concentric and yet in different planes, say, at right angles. From the account of their motion in any direction without turning, the latter seems to have been their form. This is the view of the ablest modern commentators. We need not trouble ourselves with the fact that no axletree could be made to work in two such concentric double wheels, so that they could run in planes at right angles to each other. For this movable base for the throne of God was *seen in prophetic vision*, and not in the actual world ; was constituted to be *seen*—not to run in the business of real life ; and had for its object a certain impression on the mind of the prophet, and not any particular result in the mechanical world.

18. "Rings," as used here, mean the *rims*, the periphery, or fellows of the wheels. Their height, so great that they seemed "dreadful,"

represents the wheels as of immense size, towering aloft in the air with magnificence fearfully sublime. Then the periphery of these wheels was full of eyes all round about, indicating perfect intelligence, and giving the impression of piercing thought and most vivid expressiveness.

**19-21.** Next we have the same elements of life and self acting inspiration in these wheels as in the living creatures themselves. The wheels constantly attend the living creatures as if moved by one common impulse and will. This was one of the most striking features in this wonderful combination of symbols. It could not signify less or other than that God's providences always have a meaning; always aim at some wise purpose; are evermore guided by one and the same supreme and all-pervading Divine will. II. C.

**20.** The reason given of this is, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels; the same wisdom, power and holiness of God, the same will and counsel of His, that guides and governs the angels, and all their performances, does, by them, order and dispose of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, and the events and issues of them. God is the soul of the world, and animates the whole, both that above and that beneath, so that they move in perfect harmony, as the upper and lower parts of the natural body do; so that whithersoever the Spirit is to go, whatever God wills and purposes to be done and brought to pass, thither their spirit is to go. II.

**22, 23.** Here we begin to reach the purpose and work of this remarkable combination of symbols. The living creatures bear upon their heads and upon their straight wings a firmament—*i.e.*, a solid expanse, platform, or elevated floor. Its appearance was in color "like the terrible crystal"—so brilliant and dazzling as to be even fearful to behold. Upon this base, as we shall soon see, reposed the throne of the incarnate God. The prophet again refers to the position of the two sets of wings, one set straight and joined together, assisting to support the firmament, somewhat like the wings of the cherubim in the most holy place. When the living creatures stood, the other set fell gracefully down and protected their bodies.

**24, 25.** As if to combine every element of grandeur and sublimity, and appeal to every sense, the sound of their wings, when in motion, was as the roar of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty God Himself. In the clause, "The voice of speech as the noise of an

host," the Hebrew does not imply the utterance of articulate words, but should rather be rendered, "The sound of their noise was as the sound of an host"—*i.e.*, of an army rushing to battle. There may have been the voice of articulate words from above the firmament—*i.e.*, from the glorious personage who sat on the throne; verse 25 seems to imply this. The reader will readily recall the manifestations made by the "Alpha and Omega," by Him who is both the first and the last, to John, the Revelator, as in Rev. 1: 10-16, "His voice was as the sound of many waters, and His face as the sun when he shineth in his strength."

**26, 27.** The vital points in this description are plain, and they are also richly significant and sublime. Here is the throne, for the sake of supporting which, and of moving it also, we have seen a wonderful combination of living creatures, wings and wheels, with various accompanying symbols of intelligence, energy, splendor and majesty. Here also—more really sublime than all the rest—is the appearance of a *man* upon this throne. From his loins upward, and from his loins downward, he seemed as one begirt with fire—the brightness of fire, and the effulgence of the most magnificent pearls and gems, combining to invest him with ineffable glory. This personage can be no other than the incarnate Son of God, the great Lord of universal providence, appearing in this majestic form to His servant Ezekiel, much as the same personage appeared to Isaiah (chap. 6), of which case, John in his Gospel (chap. 12: 41) tells us that Isaiah then and there "saw the glory of Jesus, and spake of Him." Numerous proofs might be adduced to show that repeatedly, during the course of the Old Testament age, Jesus Christ anticipated His incarnation by appearing in human form to His people. He appeared thus to Manoah and his wife (Judges 13: 2-23), giving them His name, "Wonderful" (not "secret"), using the identical word which Isaiah gives as one of His names (Isa. 9: 6), "*Wonderful*, Counsellor, the Mighty God," etc. "This is also He who was with His Church in the wilderness," as Stephen affirms (Acts 7: 38), and as the narrative (Ex. 23: 20-23) most plainly indicates. It was therefore only a subsequent appearance of the same glorious personage which was vouchsafed to John in Patmos with a lustre and effulgence of glories closely analogous to what we have here. II. C.

All the other parts of this vision were but a preface and introduction to this. God in them had made Himself known as Lord of angels and



supreme Director of all His affairs of this lower world, whence it is easy to infer that whatever God by His prophets either promises or threatens to do, He is able to effect it; angels are His servants, men are His tools. But now that a Divine revelation is to be given to a prophet, and by him to the Church, we must look higher than the living creatures of the wheels, and must expect that from the eternal Word, of whom we have an account in these verses. Ezekiel, hearing a voice from the firmament, looked up, as John did, to see the voice that spake with him, and he saw one like unto the Son of man (Rev. 1: 12, 13). The second Person sometimes tried the fashion of a man, occasionally, before He clothed Himself with it for good and all; and the spirit of prophecy is called the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1: 11) and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 19: 10). II.

**26. The appearance of a man.** Deeply significant is the form of this manifestation. Here is no angel conveying God's message to man, but the glory of the Lord Himself, and when we remember how in the fulness of time the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father (John 1: 14), in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we recognize in this vision the prophetic annunciation of the Holy Incarnation. Yet we observe the manifestation was such that the prophet did not see a distinct human form, such as an artist might have portrayed to represent his God. We are told little of the extent to which the human form was made evident to the prophet. There was *the likeness of a throne, and the likeness as the appearance of a man above it*. For the vision of the prophet was rather to the mind than to the bodily eye, and even inspired language was inadequate to convey to the hearer the glory which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which only by special revelation it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. In Revelation the form of *one like unto the Son of man* as revealed to John is one minutely described, but the characteristics are not such as admit of visible representation. They are all highly symbolical—and it is upon the substance, not upon the symbol, that the mind is invited to dwell. B. C.

All the *dispensations of providence*, as well as the various departments of creation, are under the dominion of the Mediator. It embraces men, not only in all their characters, but in all their concerns, in all their affairs, and in all the vicissitudes that can befall them. This is proved, not only by the universal language to

which we have before adverted as employed by the inspired writers when speaking of Christ's rule, but by the express terms of Scripture with reference to this subject, and also by the necessity of the thing itself. The vision of the wheels, in the first chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy, is generally understood to refer to the dispensations of Divine providence in their nature, aspects, intricacy and perfect consistency and wisdom. These dispensations were represented to the prophet as under the direction of one who sat upon a throne, and whose likeness was as "the appearance of a man above upon it." We are not left to doubt that "the man Christ Jesus" is here meant; for it is afterward said, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." We have here, then, an explicit proof from Scripture that the affairs of providence are managed by the Mediator; managed, too, with perfect wisdom, and with special reference to the covenant of grace, as indicated by the rings of the wheels being "full of eyes round about, and by the appearance of the brightness being as the day of rain." *Symington*.

His throne, as represented in Ezekiel's vision, is erected over the wheels of providence, which, though in the highest degree complicated, like wheels within wheels, do, to those who attentively and filially observe them, furnish abundant evidence of Divine goodness. The sacred history throws great light on this department of God's government. There we trace His dealings with nations and with individuals for several hundred years, and view His providence irradiated by a column of light from heaven. There we see the benevolent designs of His judgments upon wicked nations and individuals, and His agency in all the comforts bestowed on His people. There we trace His faithfulness to His saints, His sudden interpositions to supply their wants, to deliver them from their enemies, to arrest evils on their way to assail them, and to turn all their afflictions to a good account. There the most mysterious and complex dispensations are analyzed, and the use of every part explained before our eyes. These are exhibited as specimens, to enable us to understand the designs of Providence in every age. Instructed by these disclosures, we may daily read the goodness of God, not only in those great events which concern nations, but in those which relate to families and individuals. The whole skein of Providence, from the falling of a sparrow to the revolutions of empire—the whole skein of Providence in all worlds is nothing but the constantly repeated

action of Divine goodness and the universal extension of Divine care. *E. D. Griffin.*

29. The prophecy of Ezekiel opens with the magnificent vision of the *four living creatures*, the cherubim, and over them the throne of God, and upon the throne the *appearance of a man above upon it*, and round about an *appearance of brightness*, as of the rainbow. The seer describes the glorious appearance of Him who sat on the throne in terms that closely correspond with John's description of the same Divine object in the opening of the Apocalypse. *This*, he tells us, *was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*; words that might seem to have suggested to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews the language in which he speaks of the Eternal Son as *the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person*. And when he saw it, he, as John, *fell upon his face, and heard the voice of one that spake*. The Speaker, who is later on spoken of as *the God of Israel* (Ezek. 10 : 20), and whose presence is indicated and accompanied by the visible Shekinah, *the glory of the God of Israel*, speaks throughout in the person of the Lord Jehovah; and declares Himself the Divine Being against whom the house of Israel had sinned in all their rebellious history. *Medd.*

The pupilage of the Church, as well as of the nations, stretched over long and dreary centuries before it pleased Him to send into the world the grand element of rectification and progression in the person of His incarnate Son. He is from everlasting to everlasting, and, speaking reverently, can afford to be slow and misunderstood till the time of the end. Movement is slow, usually, in proportion to its majesty. The wheels of Ezekiel's vision were so high as to be dreadful to contemplate. Yet the *spirit* of the living creatures was in the wheels and high above, in the firmament, like the terrible crystal, the appearance of the throne, and upon it the likeness of the appearance of a man, even the glory of the Lord. Happy he who, amid the noises and mysteries of the wheels of a providence so slow and majestic, is able to keep his eye and faith fixed on Him who is at the centre of power and motion, working all things according to the counsel of His own will. *D. H. Riddle.*

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Thus the Shekinah revealed Himself to Ezekiel to impress his soul with the magnificence, the energy and the glory of Him whose work he was now to undertake, whose mission as a prophet he was to fulfil, whose words he was

to hear and then to bear to his people. What an installation this into his prophetic work! No wonder he fell on his face as one overwhelmed with reverence and awe! Let it be noted yet further that this portrayal was specially pertinent in view of the fact that God's providential agencies were then intensely active among the nations, and especially toward the Jews in both discipline and judgment—the discipline that chastened to reclaim, and the judgments that scourged in stern and awful retribution. Into the midst of these agencies Ezekiel was thrown. He was commissioned as a prophet of God to co operate by the use of moral agencies with those providential agencies of the Almighty. He was to interpret the significance of those judgments. He was to warn the people to repent, as they would escape such inflictions. He was to press them to repentance by the promise of pardoning mercy. In every appropriate way he was to supplement those agencies of providence with the concurrent influences of God's revealed truth. Hence nothing could be more vital than to impress upon his mind the qualities of that fearfully glorious and energetic Divine providence which in its intensified forms was now being manifested toward the chosen people. Moreover, nothing could have been better adapted to impart to him a baptism of reverence, docility, energy and self-sacrificing devotion. Under the influence of such views of the glorious Being whose behests he is commissioned to bear to the people, how could he falter before hardship or danger? How could he fail to carry with him through life a sense of the glory of his Divine Master, saying evermore: "*I serve the ineffably glorious, incarnate God; and I must be true and faithful!*" This interpretation meets all the conditions of the case. It fits every circumstance. It is pertinent to an inauguration of Ezekiel to his prophetic office, as it should be; it fits his relations as a prophet to the captives at Babylon; fits their relations to the Omnipresent and then specially active agencies of God's providence over nations; fits the style of illustrating the attributes of God which prevailed in Chaldaea, and also that which was developed to some extent in the Jewish temple; in short, this construction fits in all possible points. *H. C.*

#### *Visions of the First and Tenth Chapters.*

Ezekiel himself tells us that he saw *the likeness of the glory of God*. We must distinguish between the visions of the tenth and of the first chapter. The two visions are identical in form,

but different in circumstances. There the vision is in distinct connection with the Temple, the place in which the Shckinah had a local habitation. Here the vision has the most general relation and application ; the glory of God arising to visit the earth. The first idea is that of judgment, hence the *whirlwind* (Jer. 23 : 19), the *great cloud*, and the *fire* (Ex. 19) ; but at the same time there is the *clear brightness*, the symbol of God's purity, truth, and the *rainbow*, the token of His mercy. The glory of God is manifested in the works of creation ; and as light and fire, lightning and cloud, are the usual marks which in inanimate creation betoken the presence of God (Ps. 18 : 6-14), so the four living ones symbolize animate creation. The forms are typical, the *lion* and the *ox* of the beasts of the field (wild and tame), the *eagle* of the birds of the air—some have thought that the eagle represents the angelic nature (wings being the constant mark of angels), but we are rather concerned with the works of creation upon earth—while *man* is the rational being supreme upon the earth. And the human type predominates over all, and gives character and unity to the four, who thus form one creation. Further, these four represent the constitutive parts of man's nature : the *ox* (the animal of sacrifice), his faculty of suffering ; the *lion* (the king of beasts), his faculty of ruling ; the *eagle* (of keen eye and soaring wing), his faculty of imagination ; the *man*, his spiritual faculty, which actuates all the rest. Christ is the perfect man, so these four in their perfect harmony typify Him who came to earth to do His Father's will ; and as man is lord in the kingdom of nature, so is Christ Lord in the kingdom of grace ; and as the word of His commandments goeth forth into all lands through His Gospel, so the reference which Irenæus discovered in the four living creatures to the four Gospels is not without its significance (*Langs*).

The *wings* represent the power by which all creation rises and falls at God's will ; the *one spirit*, the unity and harmony of His works ; the free motion in all directions the universality of His providence. The number *four* is the symbol of the world, with its *four quarters* ; the *veiled bodies*, the inability of all creatures to stand in the presence of God ; the *noise of the wings*, the testimony borne by creation to God (Ps. 19 : 1-3) ; the *wheels* connect the vision with the earth, the *wings* with heaven,

while above their heads, separated by the bright expanse, is the throne of God in heaven.

As the eye of the seer is turned upward, the lines of the vision become less distinct. He describes what he sees as the *likeness of a throne*, the *appearance of a sapphire stone*, the *likeness as the appearance of a man*, the *appearance of fire*, the *appearance of his loins*, as if he were struggling against the impossibility of expressing in words the object of his vision ; yet on the summit of the throne is He who can only be described as, in some sort, the form of a man. That Jehovah, the eternal God, is spoken of, we cannot doubt, and herein we recognize the necessity under which we lie of ascribing to the Deity the attributes of man, just as we speak of His anger, jealousy, love, mercy and the like, and even of His hand, His eye and His ear, figures all, but the only ones which we can employ, being borrowed from the attributes of the being who was created in the image of God. But in thus contemplating God under the form of man there is something more. In the Hebrews we read that Christ is the *brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person* (Heb. 1 : 3) ; and John tells us that the *Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1 : 14) ; while a similar vision in Isaiah (6) is explained by John to refer to Christ : *Those things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him* (John 12 : 41). We are therefore justified in maintaining that the revelation of the Divine glory here made to Ezekiel has its consummation or fulfilment in the person of Christ, the only begotten of God, a conclusion which is borne out and indeed established beyond dispute by the identification of Him, of whom Ezekiel saw the appearance upon a throne, with the Ancient of days, whom Daniel saw enthroned, and described in terms employed afterward by John to describe Him who announced Himself thus : *I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore* (Rev. 1 : 17, 18).

The vision in the opening chapter of Ezekiel is in the most general form—the manifestation of the glory of the living God. It is repeated more than once in the course of the book. The Person manifested is always the same, but the form of the vision is modified according to special circumstances of time and place. B. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS II., III.

## CALL AND COMMISSION.

2:1 AND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee.  
2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I  
3 heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the  
4 children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and  
4 their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. And the children are  
5 impudent and stiff-hearted; I do send thee unto them: and thou shalt say unto them, Thus  
5 saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for  
they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.  
6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars  
and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words,  
7 nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak  
my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are  
8 most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; be not thou rebellious  
9 like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked,  
10 behold, an hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he  
spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein  
2:1 lamentations, and mourning, and woe. And he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou  
2 findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and  
3 he caused me to eat the roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and  
fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as  
honey for sweetness.  
4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with  
5 my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard  
6 language, but to the house of Israel; not to many peoples of a strange speech and of an  
hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they  
7 would hearken unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will  
not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of an hard forehead and of a stiff heart.  
8 Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their  
9 foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither  
10 be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. Moreover he said unto me,  
Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with  
11 thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and  
speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or  
whether they will forbear.  
12 Then the spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, *saying*,  
13 Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. And I heard the noise of the wings of the  
living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even  
14 the noise of a great rushing. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away: and I went in  
15 bitterness, in the heat of my spirit, and the hand of the Lord was strong upon me. Then I  
came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they  
dwelt; and I sat there astonished among them seven days.  
16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me,  
17 saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear  
18 the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked,  
Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked  
from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his  
19 blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his  
wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered  
20 thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit  
iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given  
him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be

- 21 remembered ; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning ; and thou hast delivered thy soul.
- 22 And the hand of the Lord was there upon me ; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain : and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river Chebar :
- 24 and I fell on my face. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet ; and he spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house. But thou, son of man, behold, they shall lay bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them : and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover : for they are a rebellious house.
- 27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : He that heareth, let him hear ; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear : for they are a rebellious house.

**Chaps. 2, 3.** In these two chapters is contained the direct commission conveyed to Ezekiel in connection with the vision just recorded. The commission was repeated more than once, at what intervals of time we are not told. We have first the direct commission (2 : 1-8), next the vision of the roll (2 : 9-3 : 3), followed by fresh instructions to the same effect, and partly in the same words ; then a second appearance of the great vision (3 : 12), and the sadness which it occasioned (3 : 14) ; then the prophet's visit to Tel-Abib, his mourning there and fresh instructions (3 : 15-21) ; and lastly, a third appearance of the vision, and a communication showing that the seer is dependent on the Spirit of God for every utterance which he is enabled to make (3 : 24-27). We have here recorded visions and words of God. Whether these visions were seen by the natural eye, and the words heard with the natural ear, the prophet probably knew not. The senses are not the only means of conveying images to the soul, and it may have pleased the Almighty to impress these images without the intervention of the senses. In any case the communication is equally from without, the vision and the words are from God.

**2 : 1. Son of man.** This phrase (which occurs elsewhere in Scripture) is applied especially to Ezekiel and Daniel, the prophets of the Captivity. In Eastern language *son of man* is simply equivalent to *man*. In Syriac Adam is called the *first son of man* (1 Cor. 15 : 45). Ezekiel is thus reminded of his humanity, at the time when he is especially permitted to have intercourse with God. B. C.

**2.** Because he had not strength of his own to recover his feet, nor courage to face the vision, the Spirit entered into him and set him upon his feet. God is graciously pleased to work that in us which He requires of us, and raises those whom He bids rise. We must stir

up ourselves, and then God will put strength into us ; we must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us. II.

**6, 7.** The general sense is clear. Though they are hostile, malign, severe, and even savage toward thee, yet be thou firm and fearless before them, and do thy duty. The Lord would have him anticipate stern opposition and a painfully trying life, and gird his soul to meet it. So evermore, he who will live godly in Christ Jesus and *for* Christ Jesus must suffer more or less persecution. Let him expect it and seek grace to meet it with Christian fortitude. H. C.

**7.** It is not merely as a subtle and diffused influence that the Gospel establishes a permanent effect upon us. It is presented to each of us here individually, in the definite form of an actual offer of salvation for each, and of an actual demand of trust from each. The words pass into our souls, and thenceforward it can never be the same as if they had not been there. The Gospel once heard is always the Gospel which has been heard. Nothing can alter that. Once heard, it is henceforward a perpetual element in the whole condition, character, and destiny of the hearer. A. M.

**8-10.** This eating was in vision, and not done in the actual world. As a thing of vision, it was admirably significant, implying that he must take the messages of God to his heart and shrink not from any service for God which they might involve. This roll, like the ancient book, was a long strip of parchment, fitted to roll up, which was written upon both sides ("within and without"). Its contents, the matters therein written, were wholly of "lamentation, and mourning, and woe"—all mournful exposures of guilt and crime ; messages of swift judgment and of awful doom ! How sad to Ezekiel must have been this pre-intimation of his painfully trying work ! Must his messages to his own people testify only to their guilt and

shame; speak but rarely of promise and hope, and mainly of judgment without mercy and of woe "too wide to see beyond!" II. C.

The life of God's Word must be felt, otherwise it cannot be proved, and we know nothing of it. The grand high priests of truth in all ages have been those who have received the truth from God, and according to His own direction for the prophet Ezekiel, have *eaten* it. They have fed upon it, as the Bread of Life, and have grown thereby. They have gathered it for themselves, as the Israelites of old had to gather their manna daily, every morning, for themselves, in their own vessels. *Cheever*.

**Chap. 3.** This chapter continues and completes what pertains properly to Ezekiel's introduction to his prophetic work. The Lord explains and defines his commission; warns him of the opposition he has to encounter, and girds him with the requisite firmness and energy to meet it; discloses the great responsibilities of his work as bearing on the life or death of souls; and finally signifies to him that he is not to speak on his own motion, but only as the Lord shall give him a message from Himself for the people.

**1-3.** As already indicated, the eating of this roll, done only in vision, signified that he should take the messages of God home to his very heart, give them his most solemn attention, make himself thoroughly master of their contents, and hold himself at God's command to deliver them faithfully as directed. That they were in his mouth as honey for sweetness, implied his joy in accepting his prophetic mission, showing that at least his *first* impressions in receiving this honor were those of willing and cheerful obedience. II. C.

John has the same vision, Rev. 10:8, but there that is expressed which is here left to be inferred—that *as soon as he had eaten it his belly was bitter*. The sweetness in the mouth denoted that it was good to be a messenger of the Lord (cf. Ps. 19:10), but the bitterness which accompanied it denoted that the commission brought with it much sorrow, for the tidings were sad and evil. B. C.

**4-7.** "Strange," as usual, means *foreign*. The Lord says to His prophet, "I send thee only to the house of Israel; not to a foreign nation of an unknown language; not to many tribes or people of unknown tongue. If I had sent thee to such a people, they would have hearkened to thee, for such perverseness and obduracy of heart could be found nowhere among the heathen." Underneath this statement lies a great law of human sinning. It is

only by the long abuse of great light and of rich mercies that men reach such a degree of moral hardness and such depths of intense depravity. It is appalling to think of the influence of resisted light, of mercies abused, of obligations seen yet repelled and finally scorned!

**8, 9.** These are bold figures, but are readily understood. The Lord was preparing His servant to confront the most brazen-faced sinners with firm, unflinching heart. This is said with a double purpose—to forewarn and to forearm; to signify to him what he must expect, and to gird his soul to meet it.

**10, 11.** Verse 10 seems to express without a figure what the act of eating the roll implies. The expressive clause, "whether they will hear or not hear" ("will forbear"), seems to be not merely a part of the Lord's instructions to His prophet, but a part also of His message to the people. The prophet must give them to understand that God lays on them the fearful responsibility of deciding whether they would hear or would not. They must determine this question for themselves, and bear its consequences. II. C.

**14.** *Lifted me up.* It is the same word as is rendered *took me up* in verse 12 and *carry* in 1 K. 18:12. We are not, however, to suppose that the prophet was miraculously transported from one place to another in the land of his captivity. He *went* and *came*. (Cf. verse 22, also 11:1, 21; Matt. 4:1; Acts 8:39.) He had been in ecstatic vision (1:1), and now, guided by the Spirit, he goes forth among his countrymen. B. C.

**15.** Here we pass from scenes of prophetic vision to scenes not visional, but purely in the actual world. He comes to the exiles, and soon begins to speak to them from the Lord his God. As they were in the real world only, and not at all in prophetic vision, so must his words and acts, relating to them, be understood as in the actual and not the ideal world. II. C.

**16.** The priests and ministers of the Lord were often called *watchmen*. Habakkuk speaks of *standing upon his watch* (Hab. 2:1). Ezekiel is especially distinguished by this title (33:7). The duties of a watchman are twofold: to wait and watch what God will order, to watch over and superintend the people. Isaiah describes and censures unfaithful watchmen (Isa. 56:10). B. C.—The duties of a watchman are to *take* notice and to *give* notice. II.

**16-21.** These words were specially addressed by the Lord to His prophet. They may or may not have been announced by the

prophet to the people. Essentially the same ideas are drawn out somewhat more fully in chap. 33. There they are rehearsed to the people. Their intensely solemn import is plain. The watchman or sentinel stands guard in war to give notice of impending danger. If he does his duty faithfully, and the people disregard his warnings, his hands are clear of their blood; they perish in their own folly. If he neglects his duty, and the people perish unwarned, they perish indeed but their blood is required at his hand. So of the prophet. So of all Christian ministers, and indeed of all Christians in every sphere in their relations to the people among whom the Lord in His providence may place them. They must admonish those who are in their sins of their danger, as they would free themselves from blood-guiltiness in the death of unwarned souls. The case of a righteous man apostatizing from a pious life falls under the same law. Every good and true servant of God is bound to admonish him of his peril, else his blood may be required of those who have neglected to give him such warning. The "stumbling-block" spoken of here (verse 20) is not a temptation to sin, but a means of destruction, an agency employed of God to destroy the sinner. H. C.

**17. Warning from Me.** No preaching can be complete that does not, now and again, remind the people of the terrors of the law. It is no light thing to sin; and, come to what conclusion you may about the future of the wicked soul, there can be no doubt that that future is one of tremendous agony. Who will dare it? Who will willingly go forward to it? I know of no theory of the future of the soul which by some point or other does not bring in the righteous punishment of offending man. You can only affect some persons through fear. Without imagination of the better kind, without high sentiment, without noble education, without generous impulses—they can only be touched along the line of fear. Upon such persons high discourse about the nobler spaces, the infinite liberties, the glorious sanctuaries yet to be revealed and enjoyed, would be lost. J. P.

**18-21.** This passage anticipates the great moral principle of Divine government, enlarged upon and enforced in chap. 18, that each man is individually responsible for his own actions, and will be judged according to these and these alone. They who are appointed to watch the souls of others must render their account of their performance or neglect of this their duty, but the man who sins shall die for his own sin.

*Thou shalt surely die.* The primal sentence (Gen. 2:17) is reinforced (cf. Rom. 6:23). But the penalty of sin is not simply natural death; so a righteous man, though involved in the general calamity and even perishing with the rest, may live and not die. B. C.

The condemnation that God pronounces on sin is the condemnation of the law against every violation of it. It is the sentence due to a disregard of the end for which man was made; due to treason against God's authority; due to the abuse of His goodness; due to the contempt of His mercy; due to the debasement and degradation and ruin of a soul entrusted as an infinite treasure to our keeping. And let the sinner himself say what that ought to be. Say what is due to your own guilt for defeating the end of your being; for having transformed God's temple into an idol's shrine; for having stifled in the dust of worldliness, aspirations that should have stopped at nothing short of a heavenly birthright as a child of God? What do you deserve for restraining prayer and withholding praise, for giving to the creature what is due only to the Creator; for spurning the duties and the privileges of an heir of heaven; for disqualifying your soul utterly for the service and worship of the sanctuary above! *Gillett.*

No man will be condemned by the All-righteous Judge for the want of that which he could not have had. One condemnation will be, and is, that we have not that which we might have had, and that we have a clinging, crushing weight of sin, which we have gathered and heaped upon ourselves, which benumbs all our efforts and palsies all our faculties, and from which, if we had given ear to the exhortations of our better monitors, inward and outward, we might have been free. *Hare.*

Put it down as a fact that there is a law of penalty in the universe, and you can neither suspend it nor evade it. This is a law and not a caprice, a necessity of goodness and not a burst of passion. It is the very security of the universe; without it we could not pray, without it we could not live. A man cannot touch fire and not be burned. The stars in their courses utter God's testimony; the winds as they fly are vocal with His name; the lightning as it comes will be harmless as a blessing if you make a highway for it, but oppose, and you oppose it only once. J. P.

The God of heaven has said and does say to every wicked man, that if he go on still in his trespasses he shall surely die; his iniquity shall undoubtedly be his ruin—it tends to ruin and

will end in ruin. Dying thou shalt die ; thou shalt die so great a death, shalt die eternally, be ever dying but never dead. The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, shall die under the guilt of it, die under the dominion of it. That if a wicked man turn from his wickedness and from his wicked way he shall live, and the ruin he is threatened with shall be prevented ; and that he may do so he is warned of the danger he is in. The wicked man shall die if he go on, but shall live if he repent. Observe : He is to turn from his wickedness and from his wicked way. It is not enough for a man to turn from his wicked way by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving of him rather than of his leaving his sins, but he must turn from his wickedness, from the love of it and the inclination to it by an inward regeneration ; if he do not so much as turn from his wicked way there is little hope that he will turn from his wickedness. The ministry of the word is concerning matters of life and death, for those are the things it sets before us, the blessing and the curse, that we may escape the curse and inherit the blessing. II.

The law of God denounces eternal death as the punishment for all sins, not because they are all alike in moral guilt, but because they are all alike indications of the same condition of the sinner—one of enmity to God. The very lightest transgression proves, as clearly as the very greatest, the innate lawlessness of the perverted and therefore sinful will. *Bp. Magee.*

When God throws upon man the fearful responsibility of the issue of his course, and he examines the testimony of his own consciousness upon the subject, it tells him that in a moral point of view he is precisely what he chooses to be ; that the path upon which he is travelling, leading him, as he sees it does, away from the forgiveness, and peace, and hope of the Gospel, is the one which, upon the whole, is preferable to his mind ; and thus, out of deference to the desires of his own heart, which cling to the vanities and pleasures and honors of this perishable world—in the face of motives infinite as God can make them, forceful as the retributions of a coming scene, bright as the fascinations and dark as the forbidding gloom of an eternal world, he turns away from an offered salvation, and with his own hand closes against himself the gate of heaven and puts the seal upon his everlasting destiny. For this controversy between God and man God has the human spirit on His own side, and no one can wring from it a testimony in contra-

diction of the statement of the Saviour, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." *E. M.*

Fearful is even one instance of the rejection of the offer of life eternal. How long can it be persisted in without an interminably fatal result ? If men will go on, over and over again, putting from them the cup of immortality, in every way ministering to the disease of sin, and retaining its leprosy in the soul, refusing the aid of the Great Physician, the elements of an ever lasting character are all the while forming. If men will exclude the gracious influences of the Divine Spirit, and prefer their alienation from the life of God, no wonder if God at length retires from them, and leaves the completion of the sinful creature for eternity to the hands of the master workman, Death ! *G. B. C.*

The dormant sense of liability for the consequences of our conduct ought surely to be awakened by considering how we hold other men responsible in common life. Society is pervaded by the law of personal responsibility ; the weight rests on every head, on every heart. It is the burden of life which every man must bear. Every man's sphere of action is much wider than he imagines. The punishment of sin always seems to a habitual transgressor disproportionate to the offence. There is not a sinner who will not be astounded when God "sets in order before him" the facts of his case. These considerations should impress the mind with a new sense of the infinite bearings of our thoughts, words, and actions, and should make us "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Let to-day be the day of salvation by becoming the day of judgment, for "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be condemned with the world." *E. White.*

*Our voices should ever be heard on earth.* A solemn message is committed to us, by the very fact of our belief in Jesus Christ and His work. With that faith come responsibilities of which no Christian can denude himself. To warn the wicked man to turn from His wickedness ; to blow the trumpet when we see the sword coming ; to catch ever gleaming on the horizon, like the spears of an army through the dust of the march, the outriders and advance guard of the coming of Him whose coming is life or death to all, and to lift up our voices with strength and say, "Behold your God ;" to peal into the ears of men, sunken in earthliness and dreaming of safety, the cry which may startle and save ; to ring out in glad tones to all who wearily ask, "Watchman, what of the night ? Will the night soon pass ?" the answer which



the slow dawning east has breathed into our else stony lips, "The morning cometh;" to proclaim Christ, who came once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, who comes ever, through the ages, to bless and uphold the righteousness which He loves, and to destroy the iniquity which he hates, who will come at the last to judge the world—this is the never-ending task of the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem. The New Testament calls it "preaching;" proclaiming as a herald does. A. M.

Every person is in one sense or another an appointed watchman in behalf of others. Every man is in one sense or another his brother's counsellor, even if not his brother's keeper. In just so far as he knows the better or the more perilous way which opens before his brother—especially his younger brother—is a man in duty bound to give a word of counsel or of warning to that brother. When we have faithfully and in loving tenderness given good counsel to those whom God has privileged us to teach or to reach, then, and not until then, are we to leave the responsibility with them as to their action in the direction of our counsel. If they go wrong without our good advice, we are sharers with them in the blame of their wrong-going; but if they go wrong in spite of our good advice, they alone must bear the blame of their wrong-going. S. S. T.

**20.** *I lay a stumbling block before him.* I bring him to trial by placing difficulties and temptations in his way. Thus in 7:19 the silver and gold which the people possessed are said to be *the stumbling-block of their iniquity*. See 44:12, *they caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity*, lit. as in margin, *they were for a stumbling-block of iniquity to the house of Israel*. In 14:3, 4 the people are said themselves to *put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their eyes*. It is true that God tempts no man in order to his destruction, but in the course of His providence He permits men to be tried in order that their faith may be approved, and in this trial some who seem to be righteous fall. (See on chap. 18.)

*Because.* This is not the sole cause—the individual was tried and found wanting; but so far as the prophet was concerned, the neglect of his duty is reckoned as the cause of the seemingly righteous man's fall. B. C.

The best men in the world have need to be warned against apostasy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it and the danger they are in by it. God's servants must be warned (Ps. 19:11), that they do not neglect His work and quit His service. One good means to keep

us from falling is to keep up a holy fear of falling (Heb. 4:1), Let us therefore fear; and (Rom. 11:20), even those that stand by faith must not be high-minded, but fear, and must therefore be warned. II.

**Righteous turn.** (Also Ezek. 18:24, 26; 33:12, 13, 18.) All these passages are *hypothetic*: "*If a righteous man should turn,*" or *when the righteous doth turn*—which means, *If he should*. None of them directly affirm that a truly righteous man does in fact turn back to utter sinning. They do squarely affirm that, *if he should*, he would die in his sins. So in Heb. 6:4-6: "*If they shall fall away,*" all is over with them; it is impossible to renew them again. Yet this falls short of affirming that any one does apostatize utterly from the true Christian state. II. C.

**21.** There seems to be an intimation that sin is alien to the character of a *righteous* man. The words might be rendered *if thou warn the righteous man that he sin not as becometh a righteous man*. (Cf. 1 John 3:7-9.) B. C.

**22, 23.** This "plain" or valley stands contrasted with the hill (Tell Abib) where the people resided. The spirit of the call is, Go down to a retired place; I have another personal charge to give thee in private. The prophet obeyed; and there he saw again the same manifestation of the glory of the Lord which he had seen by the river Chebar. Here also, as there, he falls prostrate on his face. This going to the valley seems to have been done in the external world. What followed there was said and shown to him in prophetic vision. II. C.

**23.** A fresh revelation of the glory of the Lord, to impress upon Ezekiel another characteristic of his mission. By *cating the roll* (verse 2) he was taught that his words should be those of the Spirit of God—by *being a watchman*, that he must speak boldly and without fear of consequences; now he is to learn that there is *a time to be silent* as well as *a time to speak*, and that both are appointed by God. This represents forcibly the authoritative character and Divine origin of the utterances of the Hebrew prophets. B. C.

**27.** The likelihood of men obeying the Gospel is usually diminishing in proportion to the frequency with which that Gospel is preached to them and its appeals ministered upon them. The blessing may be undervalued because it is within the reach of all; and while an outward regard to it may be the marked characteristic of a whole community, they may be no less distinguished by a practical indifference to it; and thus a people who have enjoyed the

clearest light of the Gospel may, as they become hardened under its influences, convert their very privileges into the grounds of their more certain and severer condemnation. And so the clearness of Gospel light, and the multiplicity of Gospel advantages, may be not only the precursors, but the instruments of a general blindness of mind, and deadness of heart. And a people subjected to the well-arranged and well-plied machinery of religion may, by reason of this fact, be fast falling into that state into which we may suppose the hearers of Ezekiel to have been, which rendered his ministry to them more ineffectual and hopeless than it would have been among a people as ignorant and superstitious as the men of Nineveh, to whom Jonah preached with such effectiveness and success. *E. Mason.*

It is not strange that God should act upon the souls of His converted children in these two lines of influence—viz., upon their *hopes*, through rich promise; upon their *fears*, through warnings against apostasy. Upon their *hopes*, for they often sadly need this assurance of His love and of His gracious help; upon their *fears*, for their own utmost vigilance must be secured and kept in exercise, their own constant endeavors, their own watchfulness, prayer, and faith in God. Doubtless the interworking of these two lines of influence—appeals to hope and appeals to fear—are delicate and critical, and require a careful adjustment of promise and warning; but this should not militate against the fact that both these influences are provided for in the plan of God, and are both brought in the Scriptures to bear on the Christian heart. Both are involved in the ministration of one and the same Divine Spirit. He uses each and both as means for securing the perseverance of the saints.

It may be well to consider that warnings against danger are one of the necessary and natural means of protecting moral agents against that danger, and so are among the necessary means of fulfilling the promise of their ultimate salvation. To omit warnings against danger because Divine promise has pledged final victory would be extremest folly. For us to ask it would be equivalent to proposing to the Almighty—not to say, demanding of Him—that He save His people without any activities or agencies of their own—without their own prayer or faith or watch-

fulness. Let us remember that God's plan contemplates dealing with free moral agents, and proposes to save them only *as such agents*—i.e., by keeping alive their faith and prayer and watchful endeavor. So that the gist of our problem is simply this: Is it in the power of the Infinite God to keep alive this faith, prayer, and watchfulness of His people to such a degree as will insure their ultimate salvation? Can He apply this power of His Spirit behind and back of the appropriate Christian effort, so as to keep alive those holy impulses, and thus preserve truly converted souls from falling fatally? On this point we must say: His promises plainly indicate that, in His view, He can. He would not have promised if He had foreseen that He could not perform.

The outcome of this interworking of Divine with human agencies is that God is able to determine, and therefore can fitly promise, a given result—this result involving the free moral agencies of man, yet without infringing upon man's moral responsibility, without overriding it or in any wise dishonoring it. Else it were in vain for God to foretell future events in prophecy and at the same time depend upon the free moral action of men to bring those events to pass. "The Son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had never been born." For the fact that his deed was foreknown and fore-indicated of God could neither abate from his freedom nor lessen his guilt.

This subject ought not to be dismissed without the remark that the doctrine of saints' perseverance is *capable of being abused*. It may be used wisely and well; but doubtless also it has sometimes been abused, and may be again. When a professed Christian says to himself, "Once a Christian, always a Christian;" I made my salvation forever sure when I was converted, and I can go in the strength of that assurance the rest of my days—without watchfulness, without fear of falling, without much if any prayer; with little if any real endeavor to live and labor for Christ—he is manifestly on the high road to perdition. Who has guaranteed the soundness of his conversion? How does he know that he is one of Christ's sheep? The test given by the Good Shepherd Himself is, "My sheep *hear My voice*, and I know them, and they *follow Me*;" but this man does neither. H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS IV., V.

**4:1** Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it a city, even Jerusalem : and lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mount against it : set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it round about.

**3** And take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city : and set thy face toward it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

**4** Moreover lie thou upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it : *according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear their iniquity.*

**5** For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be unto thee a number of days, even three hundred and ninety days : so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And again, when thou hast accomplished these, thou shalt lie on thy right side, and shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah : forty days, each day for a year, have I appointed it unto thee. And thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with thine arm uncovered ; and thou shalt prophesy against it. And behold, I lay hands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast accomplished the days of thy siege. Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof ; *according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, even three hundred and ninety days, shalt thou eat thereof.* And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day : from time to time shalt thou eat it. And thou shalt drink water by measure, the sixth part of an hin : from time to time shalt thou drink. And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it in their sight with dung that cometh out of man. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations whither I will drive them. Then said I, Ah Lord God ! behold, my soul hath not been polluted : for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn of beasts ; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. Then he said unto me, See, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread thereon. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem : and they shall eat bread by weight, and with carefulness ; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment : that they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and pine away in their iniquity.

**5:1** And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp sword, as a barber's razor shalt thou take it unto thee, and shalt cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard ; then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. A third part shalt thou burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled ; and thou shalt take a third part, and smite with the sword round about it ; and a third part thou shalt scatter to the wind, and I will draw out a sword after them. And thou shalt take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. And of these again shalt thou take, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire ; therefrom shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

**5** Thus saith the Lord God : This is Jerusalem : I have set her in the midst of the nations, and countries are round about her. And she hath rebelled against my judgements in doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries that are round about her : for they have rejected my judgements, and as for my statutes, they have not walked in them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Because ye are turbulent more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgements, neither have done after the ordinances of the nations that are round about you ; therefore thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I, even I, am against thee ; and I will execute judgements in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers ; and I will execute judgements in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter unto all the winds. Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abomi-

nations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, and I also will have no pity. A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and a third part I will scatter unto all the winds, and will draw out a sword after them. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will satisfy my fury upon them, and I will be comforted; and they shall know that I the Lord have spoken in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury upon them. Moreover I will make thee a desolation and a reproach, among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment, unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgements in thee in anger and in fury, and in furious rebukes: I, the Lord have spoken it: when I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, that are for destruction, which I will send to destroy you; and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread; and I will send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee: I the Lord have spoken it.

**Chaps. 4, 5.** The coming siege of Jerusalem and dispersion of its inhabitants foretold under divers symbols. If we accept the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (as is most probable) for the year in which Ezekiel received this communication, we may observe that it was a time at which such an event would, according to human calculation, have appeared improbable. Zedekiah was the creature of the king of Babylon, ruling by his authority in the place of Jehoiachin, who was still alive; and it could scarcely have been expected that Zedekiah would have been so infatuated as to provoke the anger of the powerful Nebuchadnezzar. It is indeed to infatuation that the sacred historian ascribes the act (2 K. 24: 20), God in this way carrying out His purpose of punishing the iniquity of the people by the folly of their king. B. C.

**4.** The object of the symbolic transactions recorded in this chapter was to impress the exiles with the facts that Jerusalem was soon to be besieged; that this siege would be exceedingly severe, involving great famine and distress; and that it was to come upon the city and the people for their great sins. The date of the prophecies in chaps. 4-7 cannot be much later than the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, since no new date appears between chaps. 1:2 and 8:1. The latter was the sixth year and sixth month. Zedekiah's reign began very soon after the captivity of Jehoiachin. The siege of Jerusalem commenced in the tenth month of his ninth year (Jer. 52: 4). Hence this prophecy preceded the beginning of the siege by some four or four and a half years only. The two significant symbolic transactions recorded in this chapter are closely related to each other—are indeed parts of the same whole—viz., (1) the delineation of the city of Jerusalem on a tile, and formally laying siege

to it; and (2) the prophet's lying on his left side three hundred and ninety days, and on his right forty, and taking his bread and water by measure during those periods—to indicate both the straitness of the siege and its moral causes in the nation's great sins. II. C.

Ezekiel, having prepared his representation of Jerusalem, proceeded to conduct the operations of a siege against it. Having finished his fort, his mount, and set his battering rams, the prophet proceeds to lay close siege to the city, with an iron baking-pan between him and it. This pan must be taken as a symbol of the Divine wrath—like the seething-pot in Jer. 1: 13; and it seems to stand for an iron or metallic wall, set up against the too late prayers and complaints of a people given over to destruction. Before this symbolic wall the prophet impersonates another set of symbols, in which he represents the condition of the besieged: thus undergoing a double representative action—a thing not unusual in Scripture. In doing this he is enjoined to lie first upon his left side for three hundred and ninety days, bearing the iniquity of the house of Israel; and then to turn and lie upon his right side forty days, bearing the iniquity of the house of Judah. As this lying upon the *right* side is connected with the immediate action, whereas the lying on the left side represents, in part at least, that which had already passed, it seems designed to bear a peculiar significance and to denote the severer calamity of the two. This significance lying on the right side still retains in the East, although it is, we think, contended by our medical authorities that men in general lie naturally on the right side, and that it is most wholesome for them to do so.

Thus lying, the prophet has to represent the famishing condition to which the besieged shall be reduced, by the nature and quantity of his

food and by the mode in which he prepares it. He is directed to take different kinds of substances capable of being made into bread, from the best to the worst—from wheat to lentils and beans—and to mix them together for his bread, as if to show that the people should be reduced to the mere sweepings of their stores, and get so little even of this that they should be constrained to mix them together to form a loaf of bread. This is further shown by the careful weighing out every day of the small quantity of this food he may take, and measuring out the water he may drink. Further, to indicate the scarcity of fuel in a besieged town, when supplies from the country can be no longer brought in, the prophet was directed to bake his food by the heat of the most offensive kind of fuel. Against this his soul revolted, and he allowed himself to remonstrate; and that the burden of his representative commission might not be too onerous to him, he was graciously permitted to use the dried dung of animals to dress his food. *Kitto*.

**1-3.** The ruins of Nineveh and of Babylon have furnished the world during the present century large quantities of "tile," sun-baked or kiln-burnt brick, covered with inscriptions. Hence this symbol was perfectly familiar to Ezekiel and to his fellow exiles. To portray a city on a tile and let it represent Jerusalem was altogether in harmony with the usages of the Chaldean people. This symbolic transaction was throughout in keeping with the modes of ancient warfare. Towers were built, mounds raised, often to the full height of the walls of the besieged city; a camp was fitted up, battering-rams provided. Then, to protect the besiegers, strong ramparts were raised between them and the city, indicated in this transaction by the "iron pan." All this was for a "sign" to the house of Israel, a thoroughly symbolic process, to signify the siege of their beloved city. There can be no reasonable doubt that this was really *done* as here stated, and not merely *seen in vision* without being done in fact. For the record has none of the usual intimations of a vision—*e.g.*, "I looked;" "I saw;" "the Lord showed me;" "I was in the spirit and saw," etc. *H. C.*

**3.** The prophet here applies the general term Israel to the kingdom of Judah. So also 3:7, 17; 5:4; 8:6, and elsewhere. So in the Books of Chronicles written in the time of or after the Captivity, 2 Chron. 21:2, *Jehoshaphat, king of Israel*, and 28. After the Captivity of the Ten Tribes the kingdom of Judah represented the whole nation, and we find both Ezekiah and

Jedah calling on such of the tribes of Israel as had been left in the land to join their brethren of Judah in keeping a most solemn Passover (2 Chron. 30:1; 35:18). Hence prophets writing after this event constantly address their countrymen as the house of Israel without distinction of tribes. It is only on such occasions as below (verses 5, 6) that the distinction between Israel and Judah is kept up. *B. C.*

**4-6.** In the same strain as the previous symbol, it is a simple command to *do*. Manifestly this lying on either side, as well as the preparation and eating of his food, were to be done "*in the sight of the people*" (see verse 12). Now, since the people are in the external world only, and not in prophetic vision, this must have been an actual proceeding, and not a thing of mere vision. It cannot be supposed that this lying on one side was absolutely continuous and unbroken by any rising up during the entire thirteen months in the former case and one and one third months in the latter. For, according to the record, the prophet prepared his own food and ate it from time to time. The three hundred and ninety years of Israel began with the revolt of Jeroboam. In that revolt Israel, as distinct from Judah, was prominent. There, in her revolt and in the idolatrous decree of the golden calves, the terrible relapse of the whole nation into idolatry began. On the other hand the forty years' period related specially to Judah, marking the period of her last guilty relapse from God, and suggesting the great light she had sinned against. That God's special appointment should make each day's lying by the prophet on his side symbolic of one year need occasion no surprise or difficulty. Once indicated, the significance was clear and unmistakable. But, that interpreters of prophecy should find here authority for the theory that in all prophetic notations of time, "day" means "year," and "year" means three hundred and sixty years, is in the last degree capricious and unfounded. How can those who embrace this theory fail to see that throughout this passage the words "day" and "year" are used evermore in their ordinary and common sense, and not at all with the special extension or rather multiplication which they claim for them? Did the prophet lie on his left side three hundred and ninety *years*, and on his right side forty *years*? In the present case the only reason why each day's confined posture on the side represents a year lies in the symbol (not in the word *day*), and is there by special Divine arrangement. It is not at all in

the sense of the words "day" and "year." The Lord told the prophet and also the people that his lying a certain number of *days* on either side should remind the people of so many *years* of their national sin. II. C.

All this that the prophet sets before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is designed to bring them to repentance, by showing them sin, the provoking cause of this destruction—sin, the ruin of that once flourishing city, than which surely nothing could be more effectual to make them hate sin and turn from it; while he thus in lively colors describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and uneasiness to himself, he is bearing the iniquity of Israel and Judah. "Look here," says he, "and see what work sin makes, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God; this comes of sin, your sin and the sin of your fathers; let that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and He may return in mercy to you." II.

7, 8. This is a remarkable combination of symbols—a man lying prostrate on one side, to signify that he bears the iniquity of the house of Israel; yet setting his face toward his tile, which represents Jerusalem, to indicate that he is (in symbol) besieging the city, and having his arm bare and his loins girded to show that the assailing party is alert and unimpeded in his assault.

16, 17. The phrase, "to eat bread with care," should take the stronger sense of extreme anxiety, dreadful apprehension. Famine and terror should consume them—a fearful doom! Before we pass from this chapter let us note the fact that the scenes it describes filled out (at three hundred and sixty-five days per year) one year, two months and a fraction of five days over, while the interval between the dates in chap. 1: 1, 2, and in chap. 8: 1, is one year and two months. As the numbers in chap. 4 are obviously *round* numbers, it can scarcely be doubted that the two periods are identically the same. That is, the symbolic transaction, representing the siege of Jerusalem and the bearing of the iniquities of Israel and Judah, filled up the first stage of his prophetic life—the entire interval between his call, with the vision accompanying it, and the second great vision recorded (chaps. 8-11). This symbolical scene, therefore, was properly his introduction before the people in his new character as a prophet. As such, it was adapted to make strong impressions on their minds. Let us also note that these symbolic transactions recorded in this

chap. 4 are the text for the sermon which fills chaps. 5, 6 and 7. These latter chapters for the most part drop all symbol, and announce in plain but terrible words the judgments of siege, conquest and destruction, then within four or five years of being realized upon the long guilty and doomed city of the Jews. These lessons were full of terrible significance to their captive brethren now in Chaldea, as we shall see.

**Chap. 5.** This chapter presents a new symbol, but continues the same course of thought. Manifestly, the destiny of the doomed city and people of Jerusalem is the theme illustrated here by the prophet's cutting off the hairs of his head and of his beard, dividing the mass into three equal parts, and then by a triple process destroying them. The body of the chapter explains this symbolic transaction and unfolds in various forms this revealed destiny of ruin to the people and the city. II. C.

1-4. We have here the sign by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with and interested himself in the case of Jerusalem, and how near it lay to his heart even then, when he foretold the desolations of it; he was so much concerned about it, as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woful day. II.

1, 2. This cutting of the prophet's hair was a real transaction, having a symbolic import to the people. The balances were to divide the hair into three equal parts, each of which was to have its own peculiar mode of destruction. "The days of the siege" form a connecting link between this chapter and the preceding one. Verse 12 is God's own interpretation of this symbol. One third part of the people are to die with pestilence and famine in the city; another third by the sword in the siege and capture; and the remaining third were to be scattered to every wind of heaven, and the sword of the Lord would pursue even these to their destruction. II. C.

3, 4. Of the third part a few are yet to be taken and kept in the fold of the garment (representing those still to remain in their native land), and yet even of those few some are to be cast into the fire. Such was the fate of those left behind after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 40, 41). The whole prophecy is one of denunciation. We are not therefore to think so much of a remnant preserved by grace as of the number exempted from the

former judgments and yet not destined to escape ; though, as not *all* are cast into the fire, the sentence is not without some reservation. B. C.

A small remnant were to be gathered carefully and bound up in his skirts, yet even of them some would be cast into the fire, and a fire go forth from them into all the house of Israel. If this has special reference to any particular portion of the Jewish people, it would naturally be to that small remnant who remained in the land, but were either cut off with Gedaliah, or went down into Egypt to perish there. The general sense is, manifestly, that only the smallest part of a small remnant should survive these sweeping calamities. A better remnant were saved out of the exiles in Chaldea—this revelation of exterminating judgments on those who remained in Judah being one of the divinely ordained means for their moral culture and restoration to piety and to their own land. H. C.

4. The siege being thus represented, the condition and suffering of the inhabitants are to be prefigured. They are exhibited by the condition of one who, bound as a prisoner or oppressed by sickness, cannot turn from his right side to his left. The prophet was in such a state. *Shalt bear their iniquity.* The scape-goat was to *bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited* (Lev. 16 : 21, 22), in order that their sins might thus be removed and be remembered no more—so was the prophet, in a figure, to bear their iniquities for a fixed period, in order to show that, after the period thus foretold, the burden of their sins should be taken off, and the people be forgiven. B. C.

5. Here the interpretation of the symbols begins. This represents the doom of Jerusalem—the long-loved and honored city of the exiles in Chaldea, to whom Ezekiel is prophesying. He is setting before them the judgments about to fall on her—long and richly due for her great sins. That she is “in the midst of the nations and countries about her,” looks to her central position among the nations of Western Asia and Northeastern Africa, and to her prominence before all those nations as a people governed and judged by the only living God. H. C.

The middle place was in the East the place of honor, and it was not unusual for nations to regard the sanctuary, which they most revered, as the centre of the earth. In the case of the Holy Land this was both natural and appropriate. Egypt to the south, Syria to the north, Assyria to the east and the Isles of the Gentiles in the Great Sea to the west, were to the Jew

proofs of the central position of his land in the midst of the nations (cf. Jer. 3 : 19). The habitation assigned to the chosen people was no doubt purposely chosen by Jehovah. It was suitable at the first for separating them from the nations ; then for the seat of the vast dominion of Solomon, carrying his arms and commerce in every direction ; then when they learned from their neighbors the idol worship, against which they were specially called to protest, their central position was the source of their punishment. Midway between the mighty empires of Egypt and Assyria the Holy Land became a battlefield for the two powers, and suffered alternately from each as for the time it became predominant. B. C.

Theodoret explains these words thus : “ He gave them, he says, the middle of the earth for a dwelling-place. To the east and north of them lay Asia ; to the west Europe, linked with them by the sea ; to the south Libya. That was done that the nations might be able to learn from the Jews piety and the ordinances of the law.” On the same text Jerome makes the comment : “ The prophet bears witness that Jerusalem lies in the middle of the world, and is the navel of the earth. That city is placed among the heathen, that all the nations which dwell round about Jerusalem might follow the God who is known in Judea and whose name is great in Israel.” The exposition of the words of Ps. 74 : 12 (according to the Septuagint and Vulgate versions) agrees well with this : “ God, our King, has wrought salvation in the centre of the earth.” This centre, it is said, is the place of the cross of Christ, with reference to which these same words from the Psalms are inscribed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre also. In this sense an ancient Christian poet says :

“ Golgotha’s sacred spot, . . .  
Here is earth’s central point, and here is victory’s sign.”

And Victorinus of Poitou :

“ That holy place, earth’s central spot, we know,  
In the old Hebrew tongue Golgotha named.”

Jerusalem and all Palestine belong practically to a peninsula, which lies in the centre of the Old World, and to which Ararat also belongs. Let one take on the globe the distance from Ararat to the south of Suez, with a pair of compasses, and make a circle with that as a radius ; the circle so made will cut the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Aral, the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Asoph, the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmora, and finally, the eastern part of the Mediterranean. On the height of that peninsula, at

the sources of the Tigris and the Euphrates, lay Paradise, according to the Mosaic story ; near thereto, on Ararat, the ark rested, at an equal distance exactly from the northeastern extremity of Asia (at Behring's Straits) and from the Cape of Good Hope—in the middle of the longest land-line of the Old World. This central spot, the plateau of Armenia, was the original seat of the human race, the starting-point for the first Adamic dispersion as well as for the second Noachic dispersion. *Von Raumer.*

**5-17.** We have here the explanation of the foregoing similitude : This is Jerusalem. The prophet's head, which was to be shaved, signified Jerusalem, which by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be set naked and bare, to be shaved with a razor that is hired (Isa. 7 : 20). The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem, the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. H.

**11.** " Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head." In this vision God showed Ezekiel that He would bring down His fearful and unsparing wrath upon His own Church, which had gone away from Him and identified itself with the world. The vision is meant equally for us. God never changes. He will treat the Christian Church as He treated the

Jewish. His fierce anger will be felt both by ministers and people who turn His truth into a lie and use the Christian name as a cover for lust and greed. *H. Crosby.*

**13-17.** These verses expand and reiterate the thought that these judgments are the stern demand of Divine justice and the outburst of irrepressible indignation, designed not only as a fearful retribution upon the guilty Jews, but as a lesson of solemn instruction and admonition to all surrounding nations. This assumes that the principles on which God dealt with the Jewish nation were not unique and special, but *general*, and applicable, therefore, to all nations of every age and clime, and hence to our *own nation and people*. This fact deserves to be seriously pondered. In the case of the Jews, God has taught *us* how He will judge and punish every other guilty nation, including, of course, our own. If it be asked, Why such threatenings against Jerusalem and the Jews of Judea, *in the prophecies of Ezekiel*, borne only to the exiles in Chaldea ? The answer is at hand. Those Jews in their native land were their own brethren and fathers ; that city was their own loved home. These judgments, therefore, appealed to their tenderest sympathies, and were brought thus vividly before their mind for their moral good. The Divine hope and purpose were to impress them with God's abhorrence of idolatry, to open their eyes to its guilt, and turn their heart effectually from this great national sin. H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS VI, VII.

- 6 : 1, 2** AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy unto them, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God : Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys : Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. And your altars shall become desolate, and your sun-images shall be broken : and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the earcases of the children of Israel before their idols ; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate ; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your sun-images may be hewn down, and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Yet will I leave a remnant, in that ye shall have some that escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, how that I have been broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols : and they shall loathe themselves in their own sight for the



10 evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the LORD : I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

11 Thus saith the Lord God : Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas ! because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel : for they shall fall by the sword, 12 by the famine, and by the pestilence. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence ; and he that is near shall fall by the sword ; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the 13 famine : thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, 14 the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. And I will stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate and waste, from the wilderness toward Diblah, throughout all their habitations : and they shall know that I am the LORD.

7 : 1, 2 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, An end : the end is come upon the four corners of 3 the land. Now is the end upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge 4 thee according to thy ways ; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity : but I will bring thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee : and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

5, 6 Thus saith the Lord God : An evil, an only evil ; behold, it cometh. An end is come, the 7 end is come, it awaketh against thee ; behold, it cometh. Thy doom is come unto thee, O inhabitant of the land : the time is come, the day is near ; *a day of tumult, and not of joyful* 8 *shouting, upon the mountains.* Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger against thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways ; and I will bring 9 upon thee all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity : I will bring upon thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of 10 thee ; and ye shall know that I the LORD do smite. Behold, the day, behold, it cometh : thy 11 doom is gone forth ; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness ; none of them *shall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of their wealth : 12 neither shall there be eminency among them. The time is come, the day draweth near : let 13 not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn : for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they be yet alive : for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, none shall return ; neither shall any strengthen him- 14 self in the iniquity of his life. They have blown the trumpet, and have made all ready ; but 15 none goeth to the battle : for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within : he that is in the field shall die with the 16 sword ; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him. But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of 17 them mourning, every one in his iniquity. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be 18 weak as water. They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them ; 19 and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be as an unclean thing ; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD ; they shall not satisfy 20 their souls, neither fill their bowels : because it hath been the stumbling-block of their iniquity. As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty : but they made the images of their abominations *and* their detestable things therein : therefore have I made it unto them 21 as an unclean thing. And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the 22 wicked of the earth for a spoil ; and they shall profane it. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall profane my secret place : and robbers shall enter into it, and profane it. 23 Make the chain : for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. 24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses : I will 25 also make the pride of the strong to cease ; and their holy places shall be profaned. De- 26 struction cometh ; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour ; and they shall seek a vision of the 27 prophet ; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled : I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them ; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

**Chap. 6.** This chapter is in the same strain with chaps. 4, 5 and 7—predicting fearful judgments on the land and people of Judah—this strain being broken only by a brief reference to a remnant that should survive and repent (verses 8, 9). H. C.

The former prophecies concerned the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of Judea. The present is addressed to the whole land and people of Israel, which is to be included in a like judgment. The ground of the judgment is *idolatry*, and the whole rests on De. 12. There an injunction was given to the people of God to root out and utterly destroy idols and idol worship. This they had not done; nay, they had themselves joined in this false worship. Therefore Jehovah will bring about that destruction, which they had failed to inflict, and will include those who have thus joined themselves to the heathen. Hence the force of *I, even I*. "I will Myself do what you should have done." The prophecy is against the *mountains* of Israel, not so much because the land of Israel was characterized by *mountains* and deep valleys, as because the mountains and valleys were the seats of idol worship. B. C.

**1-7.** With a bold personification, the mountains, hills, ravines and valleys, desecrated by the horrid rites of idolatry, are here addressed as if intelligent and conscious of guilt and danger. The Lord threatens to bring the sword upon those desecrated places, and to cut down the guilty idolaters so that their dead bodies shall lie unburied around their altars and before their idols.

**8-10.** The destruction of the covenant people will not be universal and utter. A small remnant of the captives will be spared and ultimately brought to repentance. This precious truth is interposed here for the comfort of those who still retained some fear of God, and for the encouragement of those who could be moved to serious thought toward repentance. H. C.

**9.** The product and evidence of their repentance: "They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." Thus God will give them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. His goodness takes occasion from their badness to appear the more illustrious. Those that truly loathe sin cannot but loathe themselves because of sin; self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themselves, and can never be reconciled to themselves till they have some ground to hope that God is reconciled to them;

nay, then they shall lie down in their shame when He is pacified toward them. H.

Since Ezekiel is addressing the Church of God through Israel, we are to note here that the general principle of the Divine administration is laid down. Sin leads to judgment, judgment to repentance, repentance to forgiveness, forgiveness to reconciliation, reconciliation to a knowledge of communion with God. B. C.

**11-14.** The same threatenings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this, are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that those he prophesied to might be the more affected with the foresight of them. H.—The people would have convincing proof that God had spoken these words of doom when they should see the idol worshippers lying dead among their idols and around their altars in every place where they had made offerings to idol gods.

**Chap. 7.** This chapter continues and closes this particular message, and announces the fearful doom of the guilty Jews and of their city. The points made specially prominent are: that this day of judgment is *very near*, and that the ruin it shall bring upon the city, the land, and the people shall be extreme and utter. H. C.

This chapter is a dirge rather than a prophecy. The prophet laments over the near approach of the day wherein the final blow shall be struck, and the city be made the prey of the Chaldean invader. Supposing the date of the prophecy to be the same as that of the preceding, there were now but four, or perhaps three, years to the final overthrow of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. B. C.

**1-4.** A terrible emphasis is laid upon the oft-repeated words, "*the end is come*." The land is to be made utterly desolate. Its beauty and glory will go down in the darkness of night. God will pour out His wrath upon them and requite them for all their abominable idolatries. "Thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee," implies that they will be there, not as sins being committed and enjoyed, but as sins calling loudly for retribution and bringing it down terribly upon the long-sinning people.

**6.** The end is the predestined, long-predicted and deserved end. In the next clause read, *it awaketh and riseth up against thee*—as if it had been a slumbering giant, but now starts from its slumbers and puts itself on the alert to do its work. H. C.

The end cometh of that "*now*" in which "God commandeth all men everywhere to re-

pent." But with the end of time comes *not* the end of duration or being. With the end of *these* employments comes not the end of the soul's activity. With the end of *these* possessions, *these* enjoyments and these struggles and afflictions comes not the end of *all* possessions, of all pleasure and of all pain. All the plans, the experiences, the achievements, the hopes of this earthly life, are but the beginnings of endless lines and endless issues. And with this ceaseless continuance of being, the formed character *abides unchanged*. He that is holy shall be holy still. He that is unholy shall be unholy still. The soul forgiven, renewed, transformed, made pure by Divine power through grace, shall be forever maintained in its possession of holiness, in its perfected likeness to and oneness with God, and abide forever with the Lord. The soul unforgiven, unrenewed, and unsanctified shall be forever abandoned to its chosen heritage of fellowship with lost angels in the dark realm of guilty despair. Nor in these differing states and spheres shall there be an end of action. Every energy of mind, heart, will, judgment, memory, feeling, all shall find ceaseless employ. Upon the past, without oblivion of aught, upon the experiences of the present, upon the prospects of the future, the holy and unholy soul alike shall be forever actively employed, with every energy absorbed in its appointed work, its work of grateful memory, of praise and holy service in the presence of God, or its work of self-accusation, of ever-prolonged, unhallowed thought, of ungratified, sinful desire and unrestrained evil purpose. B.

**10, 11.** The *cycle* of the Divine order brings thee thy day of doom. "The rod hath blossomed"—the rod for thy scourging hath developed itself and is in readiness for service; the pride of thy conquerors flowers out—*i.e.*, into action and life, impelling them on to war and destruction against thee. The figure in regard to pride follows the previous figure of the rod. Violence becomes a rod to scourge and punish thy wickedness. H. C.

Two sins are particularly specified as provoking God to bring these judgments upon them, pride and oppression. God will humble them by His judgments, for they have magnified themselves. The rod of affliction has blossomed, but it was pride that budded (verse 10). What buds in sins will blossom in some judgment or other. The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared among all orders and degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in spring. Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they

have dealt hardly with one another (verse 11); violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness; their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronized by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government was become a rod of wickedness; to such a degree of impudence was violence risen up. I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there (Eccles. 3: 16; Isa. 5: 7). Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain that our sin is the root of them. H.

The expression is in every way remarkable, and is very full of meaning. The rod is to be understood as denoting the instrument by which the sins of the people were to be punished. In this instance it was Nebuchadnezzar; but the consideration to which it directs us is applicable to any case of judgment. It illustrates the Lord's deliberateness in executing His judgments, as contrasted with man's haste, impatience, and precipitancy. Man, so liable to err in judgment and action, and to whom slow deliberation in inflicting punishment upon transgressors might seem naturally to result from his own consciousness of this, is in haste to judge and prompt to act; whereas He who cannot err, and whose immediate action must be as true and right as His most delayed procedure, works not after the common manner of men, but after the manner of a husbandman in sowing and planting. When the sin comes to that state which must in the end render judgment needful for the maintenance of righteousness upon the earth, and for the vindication of the Lord's justice and honor, the rod of punishment is planted; it grows as the sin grows, and it attains its maturity for action at the exact time that the iniquity reaches maturity for punishment. When Israel entered upon that course of sin which ended in ruin, the rod of the Babylonian power was planted; and as the iniquities of Israel increased, the rod went on growing until, under Nebuchadnezzar, it became a great tree, overshadowing the nations; and when the full term was come it was ripe and ready for the infliction of the judgments upon Israel, which had so often been denounced, and were so greatly needed.

Exactly the same course was followed in the case of the Canaanites whom the Israelites superseded in the possession of Palestine. In that case Israel was the rod of Canaan. The rod was planted long before "the iniquities of the Canaanites were full" for judgment; but when that time arrived, the rod of judgment had grown to blossoming, and the long-predicted punishment was no longer withheld. All was

ready; the sinners were ready for judgment—the rod was ready to inflict it. The same was the course with Babylon itself, in the present case the rod of Israel. For her pride, her arrogance, and her unrighteousness she was doomed to be brought low. The prophets foretold it; and they indicated the yet unplanted Medo-Persian rod as the future instrument of her chastisement. The rod was planted—it grew; and when it blossomed in strength the Lord brake in pieces therewith many nations, as He had threatened—great Babylon being the first and the chief.

God does not now deal any differently with mankind. As signal instances might be given from the modern history of nations, as any that ancient history can produce. No century of time has been more replete with them than the present. To produce instances would lead into the field of politics, which we avoid. But this we can say, that so sure as any nation enters upon and persists in a course of unrighteousness, or addicts itself to any particular sin, so surely the rod of judgment is planted; so surely will it blossom for chastisement at the set time.

To come nearer: as God deals with nations, so does He deal with individuals; there is the same law for both. Whether a man professes to be in Christ or not, if he follow any unrighteous course—if he cherish any bosom sin, mental or personal, of thought or action—let him be assured that the rod of judgment is planted, and will in due time bear the bitter fruits of shame, fear and sorrow to him. Because God waits till the rod has blossomed, the poor sinner may think that God tolerates him—that he may sin without dread—and that even to the end his peace shall flow like a river. But there is a sad and terrible hour to come, which shall teach him—perhaps too late—that the rod of judgment has all the while been growing, although he heeded it not, until it sheds over him all its blossoms of mourning, lamentation, and woe.

Nothing is more certain than God's judgments; nor is there any help for us, any refuge, unless, before the rod has blossomed, or even while it is yet blossoming, we flee to Christ, and, in that love and pity which redeemed us, seek rest for our souls and pardon for our sins.

“Grant, Almighty God, since Thou hast recalled us to Thyself, that we may not grow torpid in our sins, nor yet become hardened by the chastisements; but prevent in time Thy final judgments, and so humble us under Thy powerful hand that we may seriously testify and really prove our repentance; and so study to obey Thee, that we may advance in newness of

life, until at length we put off all the defilements of the flesh, and arrive at the enjoyment of that eternal rest which thine only-begotten Son hath acquired for us by His own blood.”

Such is the beautiful prayer with which Calvin concludes his consideration of the passage (verses 9-18), which includes the text before us. *Kitto*.

**12, 13.** The customary business transactions of life will cease, and with them the consequent feelings of joy or sorrow which they occasion. Let not the buyer rejoice in his purchase and new acquisition; it shall avail him nothing. Let not the seller mourn as one compelled to part with things of fond endearment; it is all the same to him, for none can retain the choice things they prize most. The wrath of God is upon all the people, to poison all the enjoyments of life. To see the force of this passage, one needs to bear in mind the wide distinction between the business dealings of Oriental and Hebrew life, and those of our own age and country. Selling, especially of real estate, was then not a business, but a necessity. Men sold only when poverty or necessity compelled them. Hence the presumption that the seller would mourn and the buyer rejoice. The seller's returning to what he has sold contemplates that provision of the Hebrew law by which real estate, having been sold, returned to its former owner at the jubilee (Lev. 25: 23). The prophet says that although the seller should live to the next jubilee, yet the country would then be desolate; there would be no returning to the possession of land sold. This prophetic vision relates to the whole people, and not one shall escape this visitation of judgment and doom. It could avail nothing for any man to make himself strong in his iniquity. *H. C.*

Death in its various shapes shall ride triumphantly, both in town and in country, both within the city and without it. Men shall be safe nowhere, for he that is in the field shall die by the sword, every field shall be to them a field of battle; and he that is in the city, though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but famine and pestilence shall devour him. *H.*

**16.** Here, as often elsewhere, amid the most terrific threatenings of universal doom, there breaks forth a glimmering ray of hope for a very small remnant—a few who shall (as said here) be mourning over their great sins, even as doves of the valley are noted for mourning the loss of their mates.

**19, 20.** Gold and silver will not avail them

to withstand the wrath of God or to satisfy their personal wants, because it has been their temptation—in this sense “the stumbling-block of their iniquity”—an occasion of their falling into sin. I understand verse 20 to say, The people made use of their beautiful ornaments for purposes of pride and display. They also made their images of idols and abominations out of this gold and silver (as in Ex. 32), and therefore God made this wealth a thing loathed, abhorred, and cast away. Thus God is wont to send judgments so plainly in the line of men's sins as to remind them perpetually of the sins which they were sent to scourge. H. C.

**19.** Their gold and silver could not protect them from the judgments of God; they shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord, they shall not serve to atone His justice, or turn away His wrath, or to screen them from the judgments He is bringing upon them. Riches profit not in the day of wrath (Prov. 11: 4); they neither set them so high that God's judgments cannot reach them, nor make them so strong that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that men's wealth is utterly unable to deliver them or do them any service. What the better was the rich man for his full barns when his soul was required of him; or that other rich man for his purple and scarlet, and sumptuous fare, when he could not procure a drop of water to cool his tongue? H.

**23.** Those that break the bands of God's law asunder and cast away these cords from them will find themselves bound and held by the chains in His judgments, which they cannot break or cast from them. The chain signified the siege of Jerusalem, or the slavery of those that were carried into captivity, or that they were all bound over to the righteous judgment of God, reserved in chains.

**24.** Since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly gotten and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppressing of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed, by strangers, and make the pomp of the

strong to cease, so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their might at any time prevail against right, as they had done. And since they had defiled the holy places with their idolatries, God would defile them with His judgments; since they had set up the images of other gods in the Temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the presence of their own God. When the holy places are deserted by their God, they will soon be defiled by their enemies. H.

**26, 27.** Like King Saul when the Lord had forsaken him, they shall seek some vision from the Lord, but He shall make them no reply. He shuts His ear and gives them no counsel in the day of their imploring cry. So He said (Prov. 1: 28), “Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early [earnestly], but they shall not find Me.” These terrible judgments would reach the throne and carry terror and woe to all hearts. Then the nations abroad, and the Jewish people no less, will know that the Lord Jehovah is indeed the Lord, the King of nations and the righteous Judge and Avenger of the guilty.

Thus closes this section of Ezekiel's prophecies, including chaps. 4-7, freighted with threatenings of terrific judgments upon Jerusalem and Judah for their grievous idolatries and utter apostasy from their own God. Let us bear in mind that these announcements are made to the Jewish exiles in Chaldea, now only some five years out from their native land, and up to this moment, doubtless, full of hope for the future of their country, and very probably with high anticipations of themselves returning at no distant day to enjoy peace and good there. Over these fond hopes, such predictions must have passed rough-shod like the terrible threshing sledge of Oriental times, crushing them down into shapeless ruin. Yet this bitter wreck of their cherished hopes was kindly purposed on God's part to give them a new sense of the awful sin of idolatry and to open their eyes to the wrath of God against their nation for this great national sin. H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS VIII., IX., X., XI.

**8:1** AND it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins and downward, fire: and from his loins and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the gate of the inner court that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the appearance that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward of the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. And he said unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel do commit here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but thou shalt again see yet other great abominations. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censor in his hand; and the odour of the cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in his chambers of imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth. He said also unto me, Thou shalt again see yet other great abominations which they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? thou shalt again see yet greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have turned again to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

**9:1** Then he cried in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause ye them that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. And they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed in linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye through the city after him, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly the old man, the young man and the maiden, and little children and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and smote in the city. And it came to pass, while they were smiting, and I was left, that I fell upon my face,

and cried, and said, Ah Lord God ! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring  
 9 out of thy fury upon Jerusalem ? Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel  
 and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of wresting of  
 10 judgement : for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. And  
 as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will bring their way  
 11 upon their head. And behold, the man clothed in linen, which had the inkhorn by his side,  
 reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

**10 : 1** Then I looked, and behold, in the firmament that was over the head of the cherubim,  
 there appeared above them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a  
 2 throne. And he spake unto the man clothed in linen, and said, Go in between the whirling  
*wheels*, even under the cherub, and fill both thine hands with coals of fire from between the  
 3 cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight. Now the cherubim  
 stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in ; and the cloud filled the inner  
 4 court. And the glory of the Lord mounted up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold  
 of the house ; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the bright-  
 5 ness of the Lord's glory. And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even to  
 6 the outer court, as the voice of God Almighty when he speaketh. And it came to pass, when  
 he commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, Take fire from between the whirling *wheels*,  
 7 from between the cherubim, that he went in, and stood beside a wheel. And the cherub  
 stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim unto the fire that was between the cheru-  
 bim, and took *thereof*, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed in linen, who took it  
 8 and went out. And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their  
 9 wings. And I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside one  
 cherub, and another wheel beside another cherub : and the appearance of the wheels was as  
 10 the colour of a beryl stone. And as for their appearance, they four had one likeness, as if a  
 11 wheel had been within a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides : they  
 turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it ; they  
 12 turned not as they went. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their  
 wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels that they four had.  
 13, 14 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, the whirling *wheels*. And every one  
 had four faces : the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of  
 15 a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. And the chernu-  
 16 bin mounted up : this is the living creature that I saw by the river Chebar. And when the  
 cherubim went, the wheels went beside them : and when the cherubim lifted up their wings  
 17 to mount up from the earth, the wheels also turned not from beside them. When they stood,  
 these stood ; and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them : for the spirit of the  
 18 living creature was in them. And the glory of the Lord went forth from over the threshold  
 19 of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and  
 mounted up from the earth in my sight when they went forth, and the wheels beside them :  
 and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house ; and the glory of the God of  
 20 Israel was over them above. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel  
 21 by the river Chebar ; and I knew that they were cherubim. Every one had four faces  
 apiece, and every one four wings ; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their  
 22 wings. And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the faces which I saw by the river  
 Chebar, their appearances and themselves ; they went every one straight forward.

**11 : 1** Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's  
 house, which looketh eastward : and behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men ;  
 and I saw in the midst of them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah,  
 2 princes of the people. And he said unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise  
 3 iniquity, and that give wicked counsel in this city : which say, *The time is not near to build*  
 4 houses : this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh. Therefore prophesy against them,  
 5 prophesy, O son of man. And the spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said unto me,  
 Speak, Thus saith the Lord : Thus have ye said, O house of Israel ; for I know the things  
 6 that come into your mind. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the  
 7 streets thereof with the slain. Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Your slain whom ye have  
 laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron : but ye shall be brought  
 8 forth out of the midst of it. Ye have feared the sword ; and I will bring the sword upon

9 you, saith the Lord God. And I will bring you forth out of the midst thereof, and deliver  
 10 you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgements among you. Ye shall fall by  
 the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.  
 11 This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; I will  
 12 judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not  
 walked in my statutes, neither have ye executed my judgements, but have done after the  
 13 ordinances of the nations that are round about you. And it came to pass, when I prophesied,  
 that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with  
 a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?  
 14, 15 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy  
 brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel, all of them, *are they* unto whom  
 the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord; unto us is this land  
 16 given for a possession: therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God: Whereas I have removed  
 them far off among the nations, and whereas I have scattered them among the countries, yet  
 17 will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come. There-  
 fore say, Thus saith the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you  
 out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.  
 18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and  
 19 all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a  
 new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them  
 20 an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do  
 21 them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart  
 walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their  
 22 way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God. Then did the cherubim lift up their wings,  
 and the wheels were beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.  
 23 And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain  
 24 which is on the east side of the city. And the spirit lifted me up, and brought me in the  
 vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had  
 25 seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the  
 Lord had shewed me.

**Chaps. 8-19.** A date is prefixed to the 8th (fourteen months after the date of the preceding visions); the next date given is in the 20th chapter. The prophecies contained in the intervening chapters must therefore fall within eleven months. Although they were not all delivered on the same day, they may be regarded as a whole. They contain, in fact, a review of the condition of the people of Judah, including those who were still in the Holy Land, and those who were with the prophet exiles in Chaldea.

This is first represented by a vision in which the seer is transported in spirit to the Temple of Jerusalem, and sees there idolatry, so often openly practised in that city (8); the punishment of all except such as had received God's mark (9). He sees the glory of the Lord quit the Temple (10), punishment fall upon the princes, and the glory of the Lord leave the city (11).

This vision ended, and the prophet having again taken his stand as a man among men, he by a symbolical act expresses to his fellow-exiles the coming removal of their countrymen from Jerusalem and the Holy Land and the doom of their king (12), and addresses a warn-

ing of false prophets, whether in Jerusalem or in Chaldea, who were holding out false hopes that the doom of the city would be averted (13). The prophet next turns a searching eye to the exiles themselves. These might at first seem free from the charge of idolatry (for the outward sin was not committed by them as it was at Jerusalem), but there might be, and unhappily was, a spirit of idolatry which called for stern rebuke (14). He then, by the parable of an unfruitful vine, depicts the state of God's people (15), and reviews under another figure their past history, showing how the nation had fallen, and yet holding out hopes of restoration (16). By a striking figure he illustrates the doom of the nation, warns them against their false hopes of delivery from Egypt, and shows that their future hopes rest not on the present ruler (Zedekiah), but on the family of him who has been displaced (17). Lest, however, the recital of the sins of past times should lead the people to imagine that they were to suffer, not for their own, but for others' faults, the prophet corrects this misapprehension (18), and closes this section of his prophecy by a lament over his ruined country (19). B. C.



**Chaps. 8-11.** These chapters contain but *one vision*, of which I give a general idea, that the attention of the reader may not be too much divided.

The prophet in the visions of God is carried to Jerusalem, to the northern gate of the Temple, which leads by the north side to the court of the priests. There he sees the glory of the Lord in the same manner as he did by the river Chebar. At one side he sees the *image of jealousy*. Going thence to the court of the people, he sees, through an opening in the wall, *seventy* elders of the people who were worshipping all sorts of beasts and reptiles, which were painted on the wall. Being brought thence to the door of the gate of the house, he saw women weeping for Tammuz, or Adonis. As he returned to the court of the priests, between the porch and the altar, he saw *twenty-five* men with their backs to the sanctuary and their faces toward the east, worshipping the *rising sun*. This is the substance of the vision contained in the *eighth* chapter.

About the same time he saw *six men* come from the higher gate with *swords* in their hands; and, among them, one with an *ink-horn*. Then the Divine Presence left the cherubim and took post at the entrance of the Temple, and gave orders to the man with the *ink-horn* to put a *mark* on the foreheads of those who sighed and prayed because of the abominations of the land; and then commanded the men with the *swords* to go forward and slay every person who had not this mark. The prophet, being left alone among the dead, fell on his face and made intercession for the people. The Lord gives him the reason of His conduct; and the man with the ink-horn returns, and reports to the Lord what was done. These are the general contents of the *ninth* chapter.

The Lord commands the same person to go in between the *wheels* of the cherubim, and take his hand full of live coals and scatter them over the city. He went as commanded; and one of the cherubim gave him the live coals; at the same time the glory of the Lord, that had removed to the threshold of the house, now returned, and stood over the cherubim. The cherubim, wheels, wings, etc., are here described as in the *first* chapter. This is the substance of the *tenth* chapter.

The prophet then finds himself transported to the east gate of the Temple, where he saw *twenty-five* men, and among them Jaazaniah, the son of Azur, and Pelatiah, the son of Benaiah, princes of the people; against whom the Lord

commands him to prophesy, and to threaten them with the utmost calamities, because of their crimes. Afterward God Himself speaks; and shows that the Jews who should be left in the land should be driven out because of their iniquities, and that those who had been led captive, and who acknowledged their sins and repented of them, should be restored to their own land. Then the glory of the Lord arose out of the city and rested for a time on one of the mountains on the east of Jerusalem, and the prophet being carried in vision by the Spirit to Chaldea, lost sight of the chariot of the Divine glory, and began to show to the Captivity what the Lord had shewn to him. This is the substance of the *eleventh* chapter.

We may see from all this what induced the Lord to abandon His people, His city, and His Temple—the abominations of the people in public and in private. But because those carried away captives with Jeconiah acknowledged their sins, and their hearts turned to the Lord, God informs them that they shall be brought back and restored to a happy state both in temporal and spiritual matters; while the others, who had filled up the measure of their iniquities, should be speedily brought into a state of desolation and ruin. This is the sum and intent of the vision in these *four* chapters. A. C.

Chap. 8 opens a very extraordinary vision, the details of which fill four chapters (8-11). It has its well-defined date—precisely one year and two months later than his first vision (chap. 1), which brought to him the Lord's call into his prophetic office. The symbolic transaction of besieging Jerusalem and bearing the iniquities of Israel and Judah filled up the interval between that vision and this, and was now just closed. That the transactions recorded in these four chapters were all *seen* in vision and not *done* in the external world is made abundantly clear by the language which records them. "The hand of the Lord fell upon me;" "I saw a likeness;" "He put forth the form of a hand and took me by a lock of mine head," and "the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem." There he saw the *Shkinah*—the visible manifestation of the glory of the Lord. The scene closes with the statement (chap. 11: 24, 25), "After that, the Spirit took me up and brought me back in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea to them of the Captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the Captivity all the things that the Lord had showed me." All this

is perfectly explicit to the point that the scene here is purely prophetic vision. None of his fellow-captives saw it. Every feature in this description conspires to make a clear and unquestionable case of a pure prophetic vision. The great moral purposes of this vision are obvious. The Lord aimed to reveal to His prophet, and through him to the exiles: (1) The horrible abominations of idol worship in various forms as they existed in Jerusalem and within the very Temple of Jehovah; and (2) the discriminating judgments by which the Lord would assuredly sift out and cut down in His unsparing vengeance all the guilty idolaters among His people. These points it was of the utmost consequence to the captives in Chaldea to understand. As bearing on their own moral state, it was vital that they should know how deeply guilty the masses of the people in their native land had become; how much the elders and the priests were involved in this guilt as indeed the prime leaders in it by their position and example; and how terribly the Lord would destroy them for such horrible apostasy and depravity. These things would show the exiles that they had no occasion to sympathize with their suffering brethren as if punished too severely in the terrible calamities of siege and ruin then closely impending. They would also be a forcible and most pertinent warning to themselves to turn away from those same sins as they would escape a like terrible vengeance. II. C.

God transports him in spirit to the *land of mountains*; so does the beloved home of his childhood and youth present itself to his memory in the midst of the vast plains over which his eye now wanders. He imagines himself present at the idolatrous abominations, of which Jerusalem, and even the Temple itself, is the scene. He contemplates in a vision the Israelitish women celebrating, in the sanctuary, the feast of the Phœnician god Tammuz, the Adonis of the Greeks. In the inner court the high-priest, at the head of the chiefs of the twenty-four classes of sacrificers, is worshipping the sun. Then, following upon these profanations, he beholds the mysterious cloud, symbol of the presence of God, rising from over the Holy of Holies, and moving off to the threshold of the Temple. Thence it once more rises, and now takes up its position upon the Mount of Olives, to the east of the city—thus abandoning Jerusalem and the Temple into the hands of the enemy, in order to shelter that portion only of the nation which had been carried away to the East, and which was thenceforth to be the sole

hope of the kingdom of God upon earth. Wondrous picture, fitted to make the exiles accept the approaching destruction of the city and of the Temple, and at the same time to kindle in them faith in their future restoration! *Godet*.

**1-3.** As already shown, the days of his lying on his side (chap. 4) have just closed. He is now at home, sitting quietly in his own house. The elders of Judah are sitting there before him, deeply impressed (we may suppose) by the strangeness of that scene, by its fearful significance, and by the threatenings of judgment on the guilty city which we have been reading in chaps. 5-7. The Lord proceeds now to another method of presenting, first to the prophet and then through him to the people, essentially the same ideas—the sin and the doom of the Jews yet remaining in Jerusalem. The method of presenting these truths is obviously varied in the hope of more effectually securing thereby the desired moral impression. This method of presenting to the prophet and to his fellow-exiles the sin and doom of Jerusalem reveals emphatically and precisely *God's view* of them. The facts are shown from God's own standpoint. Hence this vision teaches us how God looks upon such sins as those, among His own covenant people, within His very sanctuary, and also how He discriminates between the innocent and the guilty; by what marks He knows and points out the innocent, and with what unsparing vengeance He punishes and even exterminates all save those who bear His mark. The glorious personage present to the mind's eye of the prophet in this vision is the same who was seen on the movable throne in chap. 1, bearing essentially the same description as in chap. 1:26-28, all begirt with fire, and with a resplendent radiance as of polished brass; the word rendered "the color of amber," being the same as in chap. 1:4. The impression of being transported through the air is not unknown in the phenomena of dreams. How closely analogous this case of prophetic vision may be to the experience of dreams, it is impossible for any to say save the prophets themselves. Let it suffice us to rest in the fact that He who made the mind of man must have ample means for making any impression upon it which He may wish to make. "The door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north" is the Temple. This "image of jealousy" is an idol image which provoked the jealousy of Almighty God. The thought looks toward the second command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," etc., "thou shalt not

bow down thyself to them nor serve them, *for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.*" II. C.

2. As Ezekiel sits among the elders who had come to consult him—the same Person who had been seen above the throne appears to him *in visions of God*, but no mention is made of the *chariot*, of the *living creatures*, of the *firmament*, or of the *throne itself*. He is caught up by the same Spirit as had been manifested in the living creatures and in the wheels. Here the inspiration of the prophet himself is the predominating idea. The Person who is to speak to him stands forth prominently, and for a moment the general purpose of such communication, judgment, and the revelation of the Divine glory is kept, as it were, in the background. The prophet is lifted in spirit between earth and heaven.

4. When the prophet appears in spirit before the Temple all the previous features of the original vision come into notice—the glory of God was there *according to the vision which he saw on the plain*. For now is to be the application of the general revelation of the Divine justice and wrath. B. C.

4-6. The "vision seen in the plain" refers to chap. 3:22, 23. Here he meets again the same glorious personage as there, in the form of the ancient *Shekinah*. This personage speaks to him and leads him on through the scenes of this vision. Standing in the Temple at Jerusalem and looking toward the north, he sees at the Temple gate, near the great altar of burnt-offering, this idol image which provoked the God of Israel to jealousy. His Divine Guide calls his special attention to this first abomination. II. C.

7. They were not willing that those who saw them in God's house should see them in their own, lest they should see them contradict themselves, and undo in private what they did in public. But, behold, a hole in the wall (verse 7). When hypocrites screen themselves behind the wall of an external profession, and with it think to conceal their wickedness from the eye of the world, and carry on their designs the more successfully, it is hard for them to manage it with so much art but that there is some hole or other left in the wall, something that betrays them to those who look diligently, not to be what they pretend to be. II.

9-12. There is now opened to the prophet's view a secret "chamber of imagery," the walls of which are covered with delineations of all unclean beasts and insects, portrayed here as objects of idolatrous worship. This species of idols and the manner of delineating them were

obviously Egyptian, borrowed from that land where almost every known animal was included among their objects of reverence and worship. It would seem that this base form of idolatry was kept somewhat back from public view, in the secret chambers of the Temple. These seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel were obviously the Jewish Sanhedrim, the well-known supreme council of the nation, always chosen from the elders of the people. It was their sacred duty to suppress all idolatry; yet here they are in their retired chambers with every man his censor in his hand to burn incense to every abominable creature! It was for many reasons a strong case that Jaazaniah, the son of the good Shaphan, and now the president of the Sanhedrim, hoary with years, should be leading on his younger brethren of this great council in these most base and debasing idolatries. Alas! how were the noble fallen! And how manifestly hopeless of reform must the nation have become! The Lord saw their deeds of darkness, and revealed them in vision to His prophet. "Son of man, hast thou seen?" Take note of it, for it testifies to the deep and hopeless corruption of the people. II. C.

The eighth chapter of Ezekiel exhibits the prophet's portraiture of the prevailing idolatries of his time. He here clearly and graphically sets forth that in the age of Jerusalem's doom the Jews had fallen into all the idolatries of their Egyptian, Phœnician, and Assyrian neighbors, and simultaneously practised them, apparently at the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, producing by their combination, and with a profession of allegiance to Jehovah, an abomination worse than any of these idolatries taken singly could have been, and forming a most cogent justification of their condemnation, and an awful elucidation of the causes of their ruin. We knew this before, from the dispersed intimations of the other prophets; but not so as to impress the fact deeply on the mind, as is done here by Ezekiel, who brings the matter visibly before us, and makes us, with himself, spectators of the awful scene.

In the visions of God he conceives himself taken to Jerusalem, where, in the inner court of the Temple, his attention is directed to a chink or hole in the wall, which he is ordered to enlarge; on doing which he finds a door which had not before been obvious. "I went in," he says, "and looked; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel *portrayed upon the walls.*" This is clearly the Egyptian form of idolatry. The Rev. W. Jowett quotes

this text as furnishing an exact description of the "chambers of imagery" in that country; adding, "The Israelites were but copyists, the master sketches being to be seen in all the temples and tombs of Egypt." In that country the walls of the inner sanctuaries of the temples, as well as the tombs and mystic cells, are to this day covered with representations, sculptured or painted in vivid colors, of sacred animals, of gods in human form and under various circumstances, or in various monstrous combinations of the human and bestial shapes. The temples alone would furnish sufficient illustration, but that of the tombs seems the most exactly appropriate, for they furnish just such chambers as the prophet gained access to, decorated in the same manner; and there is little doubt, from the nature of these decorations, from their connection with the temples, and other circumstances, that they were not merely tombs, but were also used for the celebration of the darker mysteries and superstitions of the most debasing idolatry the world has ever witnessed. *Kitto*.

Think of the dark and painted chamber which we all of us carry in our hearts. Every man is a mystery to himself as to his fellows. With reverence, we may say of each other as we say of God: "Clouds and darkness are round about him." After all the manifestations of a life, we remain enigmas to one another and mysteries to ourselves. For every man is no fixed something, but a growing personality, with dormant possibilities of good and evil lying in him, which up to the very last moment of his life may flame up altogether unexpected and astonishing developments. Therefore we have all to feel that after all self-examination there lie awful depths within us which we have not fathomed; and after all our knowledge of one another we yet do see but the surface, and each soul dwells alone.

There is in every heart a dark chamber. There are very, very few of us that dare tell all our thoughts and show our inmost selves to our dearest ones. The most silvery lake that lies sleeping amid beauty, itself the very fairest spot of all, when drained off shows ugly ooze and filthy mud, and all manner of creeping abominations in the slime. I wonder what we should see if our hearts were, so to speak, drained off, and the very bottom layer of everything brought into the light. Do you think you would stand it? Well, then, go to God and ask Him to keep you from unconscious sins. Go to Him and ask Him to root out of you the mischiefs that you do not know are there, and

live humbly and self-distrustfully, and feel that your only strength is: "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be saved." "Hast Thou seen what they do in the dark?" . . .

By our memory, and by that marvellous faculty that people call the imagination, and by our desires, we are forever painting the walls of the inmost chambers of our hearts with pictures. That is an awful power which we possess, and, alas! too often use for foul idolatries. I do not dwell upon that, but I wish to drop one very earnest caution and beseeching entreaty. You, young men and women, especially you young men, mind what you paint upon those mystic walls! Foul things, as the text says, "creeping things and abominable beasts," only too many of you are tracing there. Take care, for these figures are ineffaceable. No repentance will obliterate them. I do not know whether even Heaven can blot them out. What you love, what you desire, what you think about, you are photographing on the walls of your immortal soul. And just as to-day, thousands of years after the artists have been gathered to the dust, we may go into Egyptian temples and see the figures on their walls, in all the freshness of their first coloring, as if the painter had but laid down his pencil a moment ago; so, on your hearts, youthful evils, the sins of your boyhood, the puerilities of your earliest days, may live in ugly shapes, that no tears and no repentance will ever wipe out. Nothing can do away with "the marks of that which once hath been." What are you painting on the chambers of imagery in your hearts? Obscenity, foul things, mean things, low things? Is that mystic shrine within you painted with such figures as were laid bare in some chambers in Pompeii, where the excavators had to cover up the pictures because they were so foul? Or is it like the cells in the convent of San Marco, at Florence, where Fra Angelico's holy and sweet genius has left on the bare walls, to be looked at, as he fancied, only by one devout brother in each cell, angel imaginings, and noble, pure, celestial faces, that calm and hallow those who gaze upon them? What are you doing, my brother, in the dark, in your chambers of imagery? A. M.

**14. Tammuz worship.** The word Tammuz occurs nowhere else in Holy Scripture; but Tammuz is found among the names of the months in use among the Jews after the return from Babylon. The month Tammuz was that of the summer solstice. The name as it occurs in Ezekiel is literally The Tammuz. This was probably a contemptuous form of expression,

as designating a thing rather than a person. The word is acknowledged to be Semitic, and various derivations have been suggested, none of which are very satisfactory. The more ancient versions (among which is the LXX) simply reproduce the word itself. The Vulgate renders it by *Adonis*, and Jerome expressly says that the festival of Tammuz was identical with the Greek *Adonia*s. This may be accepted as the most ancient tradition, for other legends of Tammuz given in rabbinical writers seem rather to be inventions of commentators upon this passage in Ezekiel. We know indeed for certain that the worship of Adonis had its headquarters at Byblos, where at certain periods of the year the stream, becoming stained by mountain floods, was popularly said to be red with the blood of Adonis. From Byblos it spread widely over the East, and was thence carried to Greece. Zedekiah had endeavored to engage the Moabites, the Syrians and other peoples in a league against Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27 : 3), and the intercourse thus opened with heathen nations may very well have led to the introduction of an idolatry which at this time was especially popular among the eastern nations. This solemnity was of a twofold character: first, that of mourning, in which the death of Adonis was bewailed with extravagant sorrow; and then, after a few days, the mourning gave place to wild rejoicings for his restoration to life. This was a revival of nature worship under another form—the death of Adonis symbolized the suspension of the productive powers of nature, which were in due time revived. Accordingly the time of this festival was the summer solstice, when in the East nature seems to wither and die under the scorching heat of the sun, to burst forth again into life at the due season. At the same time there was a connection between this and the sun worship, in that the decline of the sun and the decline of nature might be alike represented by the death of Adonis, and so we are told by some that Adonis was the sun. But although in this way mystical interpretations might bring together the two forms of idolatry, nature worship and planet worship, the essence of the Adonic rites was nature worship. The excitement attendant upon these extravagances of alternate wailing and exultation were in complete accordance with the character of nature worship, which for this reason was so popular in the East, especially with women, and led by inevitable consequence to unbridled license and excess. Such was in Ezekiel's day one of the most detestable forms of idolatry. B. C.

**16-18.** Here are twenty-five men, their backs to the Temple of the Lord, and their faces eastward, worshipping the sun. As the other special forms of idolatry were Egyptian and Syrian in their origin, this is nationally Persian, yet was in most ancient times wide spread, and very probably was the earliest form of idolatry. Nor was their sin limited to idol worship. Under the influence of idolatry the people had become grossly immoral. They had "filled the land with violence"—the usual phrase to indicate assaults and murders. Idolatry is the legitimate mother of extreme immorality. It discards the fear of God, and breaks down all the restraints that come upon the minds of men from just views of the great, the pure, and the ever-glorious Jehovah. Thus it opens the floodgates of human depravity. For all these grievous sins the Lord will surely scourge and punish His apostate people; He will not spare; and however imploring their cry, He will not hear! There is a time for prayer; but that time once past, there comes another hour which is *not* the time for prayer. II. C.

**16. Five-and-twenty men.** It was not an indefinite number taken at random, but the number of the heads of the twenty-four courses, with the high-priest presiding over them. These then were the representatives of the priests as the seventy were of the people. In the Temple the seat of the Divine Majesty was at the west, perhaps appointed for this very purpose, to guard against the idolatrous adoration of the rising sun. Therefore the idolatrous priests must, in worshipping the false sun god, turn their backs upon the true. It was a further aggravation of their daring impiety that they took a position scarcely permitted in the worship of Jehovah. The ordinary place of the priests was in the forecourt to the east or north of the brazen altar where they sacrificed. It was only in times of extraordinary calamity that they drew near to weep between the porch and the altar (Joel 2 : 17), turning of course to the west of the Temple.

**Chap. 9.** The sin has been described. This chapter portrays the punishment of the dwellers in Jerusalem. B. C.—This chapter continues the subject of the chapter preceding. The prophet is shown in vision how the Lord discriminates between His friends and His enemies, to spare the one and to slay the other without mercy. II. C.

**1-6.** In the preceding chapter the prophet had got a full view of the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem; and here

he gets a visionary representation of their punishment. He beholds six men approaching the city, each of them armed with a destroying weapon, who are expressly commanded to *slay the inhabitants, both old and young, beginning at the sanctuary*. But before they proceed to execution, one, distinguished by his garb, *being clothed with linen, and having a writer's ink-horn by his side*, receives the gracious commission recorded in my text, to separate the precious from the vile, by *setting a mark upon their foreheads*, that they might not be involved in the ruin of their fellow-citizens. R. W.

**1, 2.** These men represent the executive agents or ministers of the Lord's providential government over the city. The object of this vision is to set before the eye of the prophet the fact of God's retributive judgments upon the city, and the manner in which His agents perform their mission. The "man clothed with linen" is not attired for slaughter. Linen, so commonly worn by the priests, would have been out of place on the men who bore the "slaughter weapons." It was the custom of official scribes to attach their ink-horn to their girdles. The executioners take their stand first beside the brazen altar, to begin their work at the point which best indicated the great sin of the people—the desecration of God's holy altar. H. C.

God has ministers of wrath always within call, always at command; invisible powers by whom He accomplishes His purposes. The prophet is made to see this in vision, that he might with the greater assurance in his preaching denounce these judgments. God told it him with a loud voice that it might make the deeper impression upon him, and that he might thus proclaim it in the people's ears. H.

It is still customary in the East to wear the *ink-horn* in the girdle. Scribes wear them constantly in their girdles, and ministers of state wear them in the same manner as symbols of their office. B. C.

**3, 4.** This "glory of the God of Israel" I take to be the Shekinah of the Mosaic economy. (See Ex. 29:43; 40:34, 35 and 1 K. 8:11.) Its resting-place was over and upon the cherubim, whose outspread wings covered the mercy-seat or lid of the ark of testimony. This removal to the threshold seems to have the twofold object of indicating that He was soon to withdraw from this desecrated and doomed Temple and of placing Himself in nearer proximity to the executioners of His vengeance, as if to supervise and direct their movements. Chap. 10:18 notes the return of this Shekinah to His

usual position. The godly men of the city must first be discriminated and marked before the wicked are slain. So in the end of the world (Matt. 28:32). The man with the ink-horn asks for no one's professions or claims or hopes. He asks only for these most reliable tests of the heart—the tears and outcries of bitter grief by which those whose hearts were really with God must indicate the anguish they feel in view of such awful abominations. Man may look on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart. H. C.—Those who keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity God will keep safe in times of common calamity. They that distinguish themselves shall be distinguished; they that cry for other men's sins shall not need to cry for their own afflictions, for they shall be either delivered from them or comforted under them. God will set a mark upon His mourners, will book their sighs, and bottle their tears. H.

**5-7.** The destroyers followed—did not precede—the man with the ink horn. But they followed close behind him. They spared every man who bore the mark, but none other. Whoever was *not for God* decidedly, strongly, with his real heart, was adjudged to be *against* Him, and was cut down accordingly. There was no recognition of any neutral class. The commissions given respectively to the man who marked and to the men who slew utterly precluded the possibility of any neutrality in the case. The men who did not care for the honor of God, and who had no tears to shed over these abominations, were at once cut down as God's enemies. H. C.

**6, Begin at My sanctuary.** Let those who have sinned against most mercy and most privileges be the first victims of justice. Those who know their Lord's will and do it not shall be beaten with many stripes. The unfaithful members of Christ's Church will be first visited and most punished. But let not those who belong to the *synagogue of Satan* exult in this; for if judgment begin at the house of God, what will the end be of them who obey not the Gospel? However, the truly penitent of all descriptions shall be safe. The command of God is, *Set a mark on all them that sigh and cry*; and His command to the destroyers is, *Come not near any man on whom is the mark*. A. C.

The first to be punished were those who had brought idolatry nearest to the holy place. The twenty-five men who had stood with their backs to the altar were the first to be slain. B. C.

The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all

other most offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin: "Begin there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and reform; begin there that all the world may see and know that the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and hates sin most in those that are nearest to Him." II.

**8-10.** The impulses of the prophet's humanity and love for his country and people stand out here with beautiful simplicity. Seeming to himself to stand almost alone, one living man among the heaps of dead, his natural thought and utterance are, "Ah, my God! Wilt Thou destroy the whole nation? In this scene of retribution on the guilty Jews, are there none at all to be spared?" The Lord answers that their iniquity is *exceeding great*; that the land is full of the blood of personal violence, outrages, and murder; and the city full of perverseness—the wresting of judgment, the violation of every personal and sacred right—these sinners practically saying, "There is no God here; He does not see us; He has gone up from the earth" (see 8: 12). Because of these outrages and horrible immoralities the Lord cannot pardon.

**11.** The man with the ink-horn reports the fulfilment of his commission. It is not intimated that the men with slaughter weapons made any report. The difference in the two cases indicates the special interest felt by the Lord in the men who are to be saved and in the faithful execution of His commission in their behalf. Judgment, here as ever, is His strange work; mercy, His delight. The spirit of vengeance does not for one moment eclipse His love for His people or abate from His wakeful and never-waning interest in their welfare. The moral force of this entire scene is of the very highest order, and is scarcely surpassed by any thing found in the sacred Scriptures. The Jerusalem of that age represents the corrupt Church of God—the case of His chosen people when fearfully apostate from God, so utterly corrupt indeed that the Lord can spare no longer, but turns to terrible judgment. One of the points of most vital significance (as already shown) is the principle on which the discrimination is made between God's friends and His enemies. This cannot be studied too carefully or with too much close and thorough self-application. II. C.

**Chap. 10.** The prophet's eye has been directed in the two preceding chapters to the sinning people and to the ministers of Divine wrath. It is now bent, as in chap. 1, on the

vision of the glory of the Lord, the particulars given identifying the two visions. B. C.

This chapter is a continuation of the same vision. The scene presented here is substantially a reappearance of that recorded in chap. 1. The glorious Shekinah, the cherubim, their wings, bodies, the wheels attending them, the common inspiration that moved them all, are the leading features. The scenes of chap. 1 were specially adapted to the inauguration of the prophet into his work. Those of chap. 10 were adapted to the purposes of this vision (chaps. 8-11), particularly to show that the consuming fire cast upon the guilty city came forth from underneath the throne of God, wielded by the omnipotent agencies which underlie that moving throne.

**2.** This fire taken from between the wheels underneath the cherubim, to be cast upon the guilty city, indicated that terrific judgments from the agencies of God's providence were about to consume it. It is a significant fact that the executive agent here should be the man in linen who, in chap. 9, has no other function save to mark in their foreheads the men who bewailed the abominations of the guilty people. But God has no class of servants too holy or sacred to act as His agents, if need be, in the execution of His righteous judgments. It certainly corresponds with His arrangements *in this world* to use them in representing, symbolizing, and setting before the minds of the people these most fearful judgments. The Gospel minister who wears holy linen in God's temple must not shrink from proclaiming to the wicked both their guilt and their fiery doom.

**3-5.** That the Shekinah removed from the mercy-seat and stood over the threshold indicates that He was preparing to depart from that polluted Temple. It may also have been a more appropriate position from which to direct and observe the movements then at hand. The sublime and impressive sound of the wings of the cherubim when they moved was prominent in the vision of chap. 1. (See chap. 1: 21, 25.)

**9-15.** The points made here were mostly presented in chap. 1. The cry, "O wheel!" seems intended to recognize them as inspired with intelligence and consciousness—the Spirit of God dwelling within them and energizing all their activities. This view is given also in chap. 1. II. C.

**16, 17.** The attributes here assigned to them show that they were pervaded by one will—the spirit of the living creature was in them.

**20.** *I knew that they were cherubim.* The glory of the Lord had now manifestly departed from the Temple, and in this departure the seer recognizes for the first time the full meaning of the vision which he had seen on the banks of Chebar. When he saw it there, he doubtless understood that the symbolical forms and the glory which rested on them resembled the glory of the Lord seated between the cherubim in the Temple. He knew it to be the manifestation of the same God. But this did not yet imply that Jehovah had forsaken His house. Now this is made clear; the glory has left the Holy of Holies, has appeared in the court, has been enthroned on the living four, and with them has departed from the Temple. It is now clear that these four (in form similar to, yet differing from the cherubim of the Temple) are indeed the cherubim, in the midst of whom the Lord dwelleth. B. C.

It only remains to suggest that these symbols are repeated in this vision of judgments on Jerusalem to show that the agencies for its destruction were precisely those which were symbolized by the wonderful phenomena of the moving throne of God. In His government over the nations of men, God wields the agencies of judgment and retribution at His pleasure, with resources ineffably vast and glorious. If we might only see them with unveiled eye, it might befall us as it befell the servant of Elisha when his master prayed, "Lord, open his eyes that he may see." "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 K. 6: 17). H. C.

**Chap. 11.** This chapter continues the same vision, and brings it to its close. While the prophet is in vision at Jerusalem, he sees some of the princes of leading influence in wickedness, and is directed to prophesy to them. While doing so, one of them, Pelatiah, falls dead. From this point the strain of the vision changes. In answer to the prophet's expostulation, the Lord shows him that although the Jews in Jerusalem are proud, exclusive and hopelessly hardened, yet it is His purpose to save a precious remnant from among the exiles and give them wholly a new spirit and a tender heart. With this the vision closes.

**1-3.** A new scene opens. The Divine Spirit puts the prophet into a new position at the east gate of the Temple, where he sees twenty-five men of leading influence, among whom he recognizes and names two who were princes among the people. These are the men who

had seduced the people into deeper sin, perpetually counteracting the labors of the Lord's faithful prophets. Verse 3 quotes some of their language. H. C.

**1.** *Five-and-twenty men.* The number carries us back to 8: 16, but they are not the same men. The five-and-twenty there were representatives of the *priests*, these of the *princes*. The number is, no doubt, symbolical—made up, probably, of twenty-four men and the king (Kliefoth). The number twenty-four points to the tribes of undivided Israel.

**3.** *Let us build houses.* To build houses implies a sense of security. Jeremiah had the exiles build houses in a foreign land because they would not soon quit it (Jer 29: 5; cf. Jer. 35: 7). These false counsellors promised to their countrymen a sure and permanent abode in the city which God had doomed to destruction. No need, they said, to go far for safety; you are perfectly safe at home. B. C. —The twenty five are represented as teaching the people a false security; as instructing them to build houses in perfect confidence that their generation would at least be safe; that Jerusalem was indeed the caldron and they the flesh; but that the fire would not consume them, who were only to be prepared and perfected by the process, and would remain in safety to a mature old age. *Abp. Newcome.*

**5-11.** *Thus have ye said, etc.* Ye have advanced the assertion maintained (verse 3). You have rightly said what you say: "The city is the caldron, and we are the flesh," shall be fulfilled, but not as you understand it; many of you will perish in the city. For those it will be the caldron, and they will be the flesh boiled in it. But yourselves shall not be the flesh in the caldron; but you shall be taken out and elsewhere cut in pieces. *Michaëlis.*

It is supposable that this slaughter was then yet future, but near and thought of as certain, and as the legitimate fruit of their pernicious influence. Hence they might well be charged with the responsible guilt of it. The prophet turns their figure (verse 3) to a terrible significance. The heaps of slaughtered men soon to fill this city are to be the flesh, held by this city as a caldron holds animal flesh. The living God will bring them forth out of this city into a bitter exile. "The hands of strangers" will bear them far away. When the lord said (verse 11), "This city shall not be your caldron," etc., He meant, it shall not be so *in your sense* of that figure. For they would surely be driven out of their city and land.

**13.** In order to confirm this prophecy to the



people, and not least, to give the prophet himself an impressive sense of the terrible significance of the things now shown to him and announced by him, all suddenly, while he is speaking, Pelatiah falls dead! The prophet falls on his face and cries out, "Ah, Lord God, wilt Thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" Shall none be left? Are the people of God to be exterminated and no seed be left to replant the land and rebuild the Zion of the Lord? The shock of such an appalling death impresses him with this painful fear, to which the Lord kindly responds in the verses following.

**16.** The exile should be short. Through its brief duration God would be their sanctuary. Although they were cast forth from the outward sanctuary at Jerusalem, yet God would be their real sanctuary in their exile. His presence was infinitely more and better than the Temple walls reared by Solomon. Shortly afterward the prophet sees the Lord leaving the earthly Temple (verse 23). H. C.

*I will be to them for a little while a sanctuary.* The blessing was provisional; they were to look forward to a blessing more complete. Canaan was still the Holy Land, the proper place of God's presence. For a little while they were to be satisfied with His special presence in a foreign land, but they were to look forward to a renewal of His presence in the restored Temple of Jerusalem. *Sanctuary* does not mean here *refuge* or *asylum*, but strictly the holy place, the tabernacle of the Most High; Jehovah will Himself be to the exiles in the place of the local sanctuary, in which the Jews of Jerusalem so much prided themselves. "We have here the germ from which is developed (40-48) the picture of the kingdom of God in its new form, in its majestic perfection, with its boughs, branches, leaves and blossoms. The Lord is set forth as the sanctuary of Israel in Isa. 8:14 and in many passages in the Psalms, which show how universal was the spiritual view of the Temple, which, looking through the husk, fixed its regard upon the kernel, and upon the all-merciful presence of the Lord Himself" (*Die Mystik*). B. C.

I will be to them as a sanctuary in the countries where they come. They at Jerusalem have the Temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the Temple. God will be a sanctuary to them, a place of refuge; to Him they shall flee and in Him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on the horns of the altar. Or, rather, they shall have such communion with God in the land of

their captivity as it was thought could be had nowhere but in the Temple; they shall there see God's power and His glory so as they used to see it in the sanctuary; they shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and His grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as well as ever the altars sanctified the gift, so that they shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. II.

This is a text *for all our changes of place*, for our journeys, for our absences. It is a text to take round the world with us if we are going. "I will be to them as a sanctuary." Where? "In the countries where they shall come." He builds a sanctuary for us just where we are, and as we are, into which, the moment we feel ourselves in any need or with any real heart desire, we may enter, and *in* which the more we desire and ask the more we shall behold, receive, and have. And this is more than *trusting* God for everything, it is—we may say it reverently—*using* God for everything, for He has said that He will "serve" us in everything except sin. For all our needs, through all our history, we may avail ourselves of God for those very ends and uses to promote which He has come down.

As this is a promise for all places, so it is *for all states*. In the coming time, when you will be sick, here or far off; when you will be glad to keep to the one room; when you will not know how it is to be with you; when "thoughts" will "arise in your heart"—not about yourself only, but generous and tender anxieties about wife and children, or husband and children, when you are gone—then remember this promise of your God and enter into it, and be at rest.

Or when, although physically well, you feel the forces of life too strong for you, and you are driven hither and thither; when change disturbs your peace, and loss upsets your calculations, and Adversity begins to blow his boreal blasts about you, and to darken your house with his wintry wing, then try to think, strongly, of the house he cannot enter, where is always warmth and always joy and plenty—*this* house, "I will be as a sanctuary."

Or when troubled in mind, although well enough in health, and quiet and prosperous as to outward estate; when you have declined and fallen back, although perhaps you know not how it has been; when your lamp is smoking and giving little light, although the night is so dark about you; when you cannot see the new name written on the white stone; when the stone itself seems no longer white, but dark-

cuing rather into the black stone of condemnation, and the murmur of your distressed soul is: "Hath God cast me off? Hath He forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone?" then try to think (think it now, that you may think it then) that God once gave you this promise, and that He gave it you for such a time and for such a trouble as yours.

For all times, and for all troubles, and for all needs, there is a present gracious God, with all His grace also present, to heal, to help, to love unto the end. *A. Raleigh.*

**17-20.** The Lord will bring this remnant home to their native land. They shall exterminate every vestige of idolatry and put away all those abominations which had been the ruin of their nation; and to crown all, God will give them "*one heart*"—not a heart divided between God and Satan—the holy Temple and abominable idols; but *one heart*, true and pure; and "*a new spirit*," all unlike what they had before. These precious promises, clothed in strong but plain words, reappear somewhat amplified in chap. 36. Their rich and precious significance lies in the point that the Lord will put His own hand to the work of their thorough reformation; that He will reach their very hearts; that He will radically cure their horrible propensity to idolatry, and will turn their heart wholly to Himself. So turned and so renewed in heart and spirit, they will walk in His statutes and keep His ordinances with a willing, loving heart. They will be truly the Lord's people, and the Lord Himself will be their God. As these words stand here, their first installment of realization must be assigned to the restoration under Zerubbabel—their first, but not their last. For, beyond a question, these promises in their ample range are Messianic, and pertain to the Gospel age, and pre-eminently to those latter times of this age when "all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." *H. C.*

**19, 20.** "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of this flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh"—*that is regeneration*—"that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances and do them"—*that is conversion*. This difference is plain, comprehensive, far-reaching, and compels the following distinctions: Regeneration is internal, conversion external. The one is hidden except as manifested in the other. Each is a change. The one applies to character, the other to conduct; one applies to the heart, the other to the manner of life. Regeneration is a change inter-

nal, moral, spiritual; and the text shows how needful and thorough the change is. Conversion is a change in the whole life, affecting one's entire manner of living, especially his bearing toward God and God's law and all Divine things.

The world's plan, in all its schemes for reformation, is to work from without to within; God's is just the opposite. Make the fruit good, says the world; make the tree good, says God. Mend the life, says the world; renew the heart, says God. Regeneration requires and guarantees conversion. A new life within gives a new life without. There is a principle within that becomes a governing principle. Have you been born again? Is your heart right in the sight of God? These are supreme questions. It is sad to see one supposing his heart right when it is wrong, as God sees it; striving after a right life, perhaps boasting that his life is right when his heart is all wrong. Better go to the bottom, and at once. We need heart back of life; regeneration back of conversion. *J. M. Frost.*

The evangelical doctrine affirms that man, as originally created, was like God in nature and like Him also in moral perfection; having the true knowledge of Him, and standing in intimate communion with Him through the sympathy of supreme and holy love; that no one of his constitutional powers was lost in the fall, though their activity was perverted, and their development hindered; but that the change which then took place was in the essential temper of his heart—selfish idolatry and sinful passion supplanting the Divine love which had preceded, and the inmost dispositions and tendencies of the soul being thereafter averted from God, and directed to selfish pleasure and gain.

The change now needed, therefore, is in this dominant spirit of the heart; to alter the dispositions, to fix the supreme affection upon God, and to restore the spiritual discernment which was possessed, but has been lost. And this is effected by the Divine Spirit, through the truth as His instrument, and especially through the revelation of God's love, as declared, with transcendent fulness and tenderness, in His Son. When this is accomplished, no direct addition is implied to the inherent properties of the soul, but a change is realized in its temper, tastes, and spiritual activities, in its relations to God and its personal destiny; a change so radical, vital, complete, and so enduring in consequences, as to constitute a true regeneration. Conversion to the loving obe-

dience of Christ is its sign and fruit. The beauty of holiness flows from it into life. It is completed in sanctification. And, on the ground of Christ's atonement, he who has not yet reached that sanctity, but in whom its principle has been implanted, is reconciled to God, and is treated as if he had been righteous ; is, in other words, justified. R. S. S.

**20. I will be their God.** That God should give us *some* blessings as His creatures, though we be *fallen* creatures, may seem reasonable from what we know of His abundant mercy ; that He should give us even many and great spiritual blessings through Christ may seem to be but the due reward of His sufferings and obedience in our behalf ; but that He should give us *Himself*—that He should be what He is and have what He has and do what He does *for us*—that we should have the same benefit of His infinite perfections, so to speak, as if they were our own, so that we may call them ours—all that He has ours as respects the use and benefit of it—this is a vastness of Divine bounty which exceeds our utmost thoughts. We shrink from appropriating it ; we try to live on something less for happiness. But He who knows the souls that He has made knows that nothing beneath Himself can ever fill their boundless desires and capacities for enjoyment. No gifts of nature, no, nor even the highest and largest gifts of grace itself, can

supply the place of Him who is the Author of them all. *Goode.*

**21.** Some will repel the Divine mercy, and will still walk after their detestable idols. All such must receive the terribly fearful but just retribution of God upon their guilty heads. It was of the utmost importance for its moral bearings that this statement should be made, fastening on every man his own responsibility for his own moral conduct. Even this great baptism of regenerating mercy and power does not shut off the personal agency of the people. Those who thrust God away and will "always resist the Holy Ghost," giving their heart still to their abominations, must perish in their sins. II. C.

**23. The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city.** This vision is no mean proof of the *long suffering of God*. He did not abandon this people *all at once*, He departed by *little and little*. He left the *Temple*. He stopped a little at the gate of the city. He departed entirely from the city and went to the *Mount of Olives*, which lay on the *east* side of the city. Having tarried there for some time to see if they would repent and turn to Him, He departed to *heaven*. The vision being now concluded, the prophet is taken away by the Spirit of God into Chaldaea ; and there announces to the captive Israelites what God had showed him in the preceding visions, and the good that He had spoken concerning them. A. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XII.

**12:1, 2** THE word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of the rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not, which have ears to hear, and hear not ; for they are a rebellious house. Therefore thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight ; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight : it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing ; and thou shalt go forth thyself at even in their sight, as when men go forth into exile. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulder, and carry it forth in the dark ; thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground : for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. And I did so as I was commanded : I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for removing, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand ; I brought it forth in the dark, and bare it upon my shoulder in their sight. And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou ? Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel among whom they are. Say, I am your sign : like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them : they shall go into exile, into captivity. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall

go forth : they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby : he shall cover his face, because he shall not see the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare : and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans ; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are round about him to help him, and all his bands ; and I will draw out the sword after them. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall disperse them among the nations, and scatter them through the countries. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence ; that they may declare all their abominations among the nations whither they come ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness ; and say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the land of Israel : they shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be a desolation ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is this proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth ? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God : I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel ; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord ; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall be performed ; it shall be no more deferred : for in your days, O rebellious house, will I speak the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God.

Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : There shall none of my words be deferred any more, but the word which I shall speak shall be performed, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 12.** In this chapter the prophet by Divine direction makes himself a suggestive sign of the people going into captivity (verses 1-16) ; eats his bread with trembling to denote the terror of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Israel (verses 17-20) ; and rebukes their presumption in assuming that the predictions of judgments borne to them by the prophets referred only to some far distant time. H. C.

The whole account of this transaction marks it as a real act. The prophet was to be a *sign* to his countrymen, and the *exiles* as well as those that remained in Judea had need to be taught this lesson, for though themselves far away, they looked to Jerusalem as their home, and were scarcely less eager for its safety than the inhabitants themselves. All the particulars which Ezekiel here foretold then actually occurred, but at this time Zedekiah seemed to be prosperous, and the Jews at Jerusalem expected, it is clear, a long continuance of his prosperity. The prophetic character of the passage is undoubted (the prophet is declared to be a *sign*)—the genuineness of the book and of the passage, and the position of the passage in the book, are beyond dispute ; in the historical event we have an exact fulfilment. The only

legitimate inference is that the prophet received his knowledge from above. B. C.

**1, 2.** This propensity to self blindness is adduced here as a reason for one more effort to put the near impending captivity of Judah and Jerusalem palpably before the eyes of the exiles in Chaldea, in the hope that so they will be made to see and apprehend it as true. It is well here to note definitely how the subject matter of this chapter stands related on the one hand to the exiles among whom Ezekiel was living, and on the other to the people yet remaining in Judah and Jerusalem to whom those prophecies referred more or less directly. We must assume the closest sympathy between the exiles and their brethren yet in their native land. The exiles clung to the belief that the city and the nation were safe, and that they themselves were soon to return. Now there was practically no hope of their being brought to repentance till these illusions were dispelled. Hence these varied and persistent efforts of the Lord through Ezekiel to impress the exiles with a sense of the incorrigible wickedness, the damning guilt, and the certain and near impending doom of the holy city and of the people of Judah. Here "the rebellious house"

(verse 2) is primarily the body of the exiles among whom the prophet then lived. This significant symbol of removing into captivity was placed before them in order to make a strong impression on their mind. The captivity referred to was that of Zedekiah, then king of Judah. In like manner the prophet (verses 17-20) eats his bread with trembling to give the exiles a more impressive sense of the condition of the people of Jerusalem in the approaching siege. The proverb referred to (verse 22) was in vogue "*in the land of Israel*;" but its rebuke and refutation were immensely needed for the exiles in Chaldaea. These points are important toward a clear apprehension of the scope of this chapter.

**3-7.** This is a thing done in fact. The prophet is commanded to *do it* in sight of the people; and he testifies that he *did do it*. Its symbolic import was to represent the going forth of the prince and people of Jerusalem from their city into captivity. The special points of the representation were: 1. Providing for himself the requisite apparatus for carrying a few indispensable things—his knapsack or travelling-bag—for this is the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered "*stuff*," which is not his baggage, but his *bag*—that in which he carried his baggage. 2. He was to go out of his house, not through the door, but through a hole which he dug in the wall. This represented the mode of Zedekiah's escape from the city as given by Jeremiah (chap. 39: 4); "And when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them (the Chaldean officers) and all the men of war (*i.e.*, saw them to be really within the city), then they fled and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the king's garden, between the two walls (a private exit), and he went out the way of the plain." This corresponded to digging through the wall of one's house instead of going out at the door. (Cf. also Jer. 52: 7 and 2 K. 25: 4-6.) 3. He was to go out by night, bearing his valuables on his shoulder. This corresponds also with the time of Zedekiah's flight. 4. He covered his face so as not to see the ground, to indicate the bitter grief of the king and of his people when at last their hopes were crushed and they were compelled to leave—he his throne and they their city and homes—for the doubtful chances of escape, and the probable doom of death or captivity. So David, fleeing from Absalom, "went weeping and with his head covered" (2 Sam. 15: 30).

**8-11.** Has this symbolic and strange transaction failed to excite the attention of this stupid,

self-blinded people? This seems to be the implication in this question (verse 9). But if so, let us still persist in the effort to get this truth into their mind. Go therefore and say unto them, "This *burden*" (always a prediction of calamity) "*refers to the king of Jerusalem*" (Zedekiah) "and to all the house of Israel that are among them"—the house of Israel being the people of the city, and the word "*them*" among whom they were, referring perhaps to the army largely drawn from other parts of the country. It therefore related especially to the king and his army, not excluding the people of the city yet surviving. Ezekiel is accustomed to call the king by this name, "the prince." (See chaps. 7: 27; 21: 25.) Say also, "I am your sign." The Lord directed me to do this thing to represent to you the doom of Jerusalem, and of its king and people. They are destined to go into captivity.

**12-15.** The symbol was to have its precise fulfilment in Zedekiah, who should in like manner bear away his little parcel of valuables; dig through the wall for a private exit, and go away in the sadness of his grief as one whose face is covered and who sees not the ground. Remarkably Ezekiel makes no mention of Zedekiah's loss of his eyes, and gives no clue to explain the apparent enigma of his being brought to Babylon and dying there, yet never seeing it. Jeremiah solves this enigma by recording that the king of Babylon put out his eyes at Riblah, and afterward bound him with chains to carry him to Babylon (Jer. 39: 7). Ezekiel had no solicitude to make out the truth of his own predictions by showing their fulfilment. To this fact of his not seeing Babylon, the prophet's going forth with his face so covered that he saw not the ground, seems to have had a somewhat special reference. God did scatter His army widely, first over the country of Judah and ultimately into Egypt and elsewhere. (See Jer. 39: 4, 5; 40: 7-10; 41: 11-18; 42: 44.)

**16.** One purpose in sparing a small remnant was that they might testify among the heathen nations that the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah was a judgment from God for their great sins of idol worship. They might bear this testimony either orally and purposely, or indirectly and without purpose, by what was apparent in their life and in their doom.

**17-20.** This too was a symbolic act. The prophet was to eat his bread and drink his water with manifest perturbation, as one trembling in dread of some dire calamity. This the Lord Himself applies to the people of Jerusa-

lem and of the land of Israel. It indicated the terror they were doomed to feel. The comprehensive thing here named as the moral cause of this terror is "the violence of all" the people in the land. II. C.

21-28. Various methods had been used to awaken this secure and careless people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be stirred up, by repentance and reformation, to prevent them. The prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power that one would think they must needs be wrought upon; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it—viz., by telling themselves and one another that though these judgments threatened should come at last, yet they would not come of a long

time. This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered and showed to be vain and groundless, in two messages which God sent to them by the prophet at different times, both to the same purport; such care, such pains must the prophet take to undeceive them! II.

21-25. It had passed into a proverb, so persistently was the delusion cherished that the days of predicted evil had been postponed far into the future, and every vision was failing as to any practical application to the generation then living. The prophet is commanded to confront this delusion and assure the people that every prediction would soon be fulfilled.

In verses 26-28 essentially the same thought is repeated with greater emphasis and fulness. II. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XIII, XIV.

13: 1, 2 AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own heart, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord God: Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets have been like foxes in the waste places. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the fence for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen vanity and lying divination, that say, The LORD saith; and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made men to hope that the word should be confirmed. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith; albeit I have not spoken?

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. And mine hand shall be against the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the council of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there is no peace; and when one buildeth up a wall, behold, they daub it with untempered mortar: say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord God: I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered: and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Thus will I accomplish my fury upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar; and I will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it: to wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God.

17 And thou, son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, and say, Thus saith the Lord God:

Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of

*persons of every stature to hunt souls!* Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and save souls  
 19 alive for yourselves? And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley  
 and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that  
 20 should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies. Wherefore thus saith  
 the Lord God: Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to  
 make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls go, even the  
 21 souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people  
 out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know  
 22 that I am the LORD. Because with lies ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I  
 have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return  
 23 from his wicked way, and be saved alive: therefore ye shall no more see vanity, nor divine  
 divinations: and I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am  
 the LORD.

**II: 1, 2** Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the  
 3 word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have taken their idols into  
 their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be in-  
 4 quired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the  
 Lord God: Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth  
 the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD  
 5 will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house  
 of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.  
 6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God: Return ye, and turn your-  
 7 selves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every  
 one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, which separateth himself  
 from me, and taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity  
 before his face, and cometh to the prophet to inquire for himself of me; I the LORD will an-  
 8 swer him by myself: and I will set my face against that man, and will make him an aston-  
 ishment, for a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and  
 9 ye shall know that I am the LORD. And if the prophet be deceived and speaketh a word,  
 I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will  
 10 destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. And they shall bear their iniquity: the  
 11 iniquity of the prophet shall be even as the iniquity of him that seeketh *unto him*; that the  
 house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither defile themselves any more with all  
 their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the  
 Lord God.

12, 13 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when a land sinneth  
 against me by committing a trespass, and I stretch out mine hand upon it, and break the  
 14 staff of the bread thereof, and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast; though  
 these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls  
 15 by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the  
 land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the  
 16 beasts; though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver  
 17 neither sons nor daughters: they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. Or  
 if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off  
 18 from it man and beast; though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God,  
 they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.  
 19 Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off  
 20 from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord  
 God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by  
 21 their righteousness. For thus saith the Lord God: How much more when I send my four  
 sore judgements upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beasts, and the  
 22 pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant  
 that shall be carried forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you,  
 and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil  
 23 that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. And  
 they shall comfort you, when ye see their way and their doings: and ye shall know that I  
 have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 13.** This chapter must be read together with the twenty-third of Jeremiah. The identity of phrases and ideas force upon us the conclusion that the author of the one must have had the other before him. We know that Jeremiah's writings were forwarded to the Jews in Chaldea (Jer. 29), and there is therefore no reason to doubt that Ezekiel took up a well known prophecy to enforce and apply it to his companions in exile. They probably had read Jeremiah's words as referring to others than themselves. Ezekiel now would teach them that it is not at Jerusalem alone that false prophets are to be discovered and reproved. B. C.

In this chapter the Lord rebukes the false prophets (verses 1-16) and the false prophetesses (verses 17-23), denouncing wars and judgments upon them, and pledging Himself to deliver His people from their pernicious influence.

**1-3.** False prophets were a fearful curse to the people in this corrupt age. Jeremiah had occasion to expose and rebuke their devices repeatedly. (See Jer. 14: 13-16; 23: 9-40; 27 and 28.) It appears, even in Jeremiah, that there were false prophets not in Judea only, but among the exiles in Chaldea. (See Jer. 29: 15-32 and notes there.) Consequently they withstood Ezekiel's influence in Chaldea as they had Jeremiah's in Judea. The Lord, therefore, sends them by His prophet this caustic and scathing message. They are here described forcibly and truly as those who prophesied out of their own heart and not from God; following their own spirit, and not the Spirit of the Lord; foolish in the sense of lying and impious; men who pretended to have seen visions from God, but who had seen nothing. H. C.

**4.** These false prophets are represented as the foxes who, having got their prey by great subtlety, run to the desert to hide both themselves and it. So, the false prophets, when the event did not answer to their prediction, *got out of the way*, that they might not be overwhelmed with the reproaches and indignation of the people. A. C.

**4, 5.** False prophets are pertinently compared to foxes, since Israel was the Lord's vine, and "the little foxes spoiled the vines" (Cant. 2: 5); and because they came in through the breaches in the garden wall, and the rents in the enclosing hedge, and thus did the more mischief because of these weak points in the gardener's means of protection. They never set themselves to repair these breaches, as God's true shepherds would have done; but they either perpetrate the more mischief, or

slink away into the desert, reckless of all responsibility for repairing the vineyard walls and hedges. (See Ezek. 22: 30.) "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." In verse 5 there seems to be a double figure; a breach in the enclosure of the vineyard, as above explained; and a breach in the city walls through which the enemy are forcing their way in battle in the day of the Lord's vengeance upon the city. In the latter emergency all true patriots rush to the breach, to repair it if possible, or at least to confront the foe at this point of chief peril. These false prophets had no such patriotism.

**6, 7.** "Vanity" here (as usual), in the sense of falsehood. They claimed to be sent of God, and made use of the established formula of prophecy, "the Lord saith;" when in fact the Lord had said nothing to them at all. Yet they made some of the people believe them, or at least *hope* that their words would prove true. In verse 7 the interrogative repeats the thought in a stronger form, appealing to themselves to say if this charge of lying were not true.

**10-16.** The false prophets seduced the people by promising them peace from God when God had not promised peace, but had predicted ruin. The figure of a wall, built up and plastered with worthless mortar, looks somewhat to the similar allusion in verse 5. The false prophets did not rush into the deadly breach and breast the foe there, nor did they labor to close up the rent hedge; but they did build up a miserable wall of protection for the people and plaster it with mortar that had no cohesive power; in other words, their lives allayed those fears of the people which God sought to arouse, and also inspired hopes of peace which God sought to dispel, that He might press them to look to Himself alone for refuge. A "wall" should naturally be a symbol of strength and protection—here, against the judgments with which God had threatened the nation. The figure of the worthless wall and its treacherous mortar is carried out fully. It shall surely fall. The Lord will overwhelm it with terrific showers, great hailstones and a furious wind; its very foundations shall be laid bare, and its builders (even all these false prophets) *shall be utterly consumed under its ruins*—for verse 16 is entirely explicit in applying this figure. H. C.

These are the very agencies by which the Lord now overthrows in a night whole villages thus built with untempered mortar. "So will



I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundations thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof." A calamity, this, of very frequent occurrence. I have known many such during my residence in this land, and this whole passage is so graphic and true to experience that the prophet, beyond a doubt, drew the picture from scenes with which he was personally familiar. W. M. T.

The builders of the wall, and those that daubed it, will themselves be buried in the ruins of it—"It shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof" (verse 14). And thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the just intentions of it, shall be accomplished to the uttermost, both upon the wall and upon them that have daubed it (verse 15). The same judgments that will prove the false prophets to be false will punish them for their falsehood; and they themselves shall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that justice which they bid defiance to. Thus, if the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will fall together into the ditch. Those that deceive others will, in the end, prove to have deceived themselves; and no doom will be more dreadful than that of unfaithful ministers, that flattered sinners in their sins. H.

To tempt another is worse than to sin thyself. When you tempt, you do that which you cannot undo with your repentance. *Gurnall*.—It is devils' work to seduce simple souls from allegiance to Christ. There are busy hands to-day laying stumbling-blocks in the way, especially of young Christians—stumbling-blocks of doubt, of frivolity, of slackened morality and the like. It were better, says one who saw clearly into that awful realm beyond, if the big millstone were knotted about their necks, and they were flung into the deepest place of the lake that lay before him as he spoke. He does not speak exaggerated words; and if a solemn strain of vehemence, unlike his ordinary calm, is audible here, it is because what he knew, and did not tell, gave solemn earnestness to his veiled and awe-inspiring prophecy of doom. What imagination shall fill out the details of the "worse than" which lurks behind that "better"? A. M.

**17-19.** Some women also as well as men were guilty of this horrible sin of lying prophecy to deceive souls to their ruin. To such the

remainder of the chapter relates. The figures which represent their seductive influence belong to their sex, being drawn from things which women manufacture. The male prophets are builders of walls; the female sew pillows, cushions, quilts; providing every luxury in that line to allure people away from God and into deeper sin. The word rendered "arm-holes" clearly means the finger-joints. Pillows for the head are not deemed extravagant; but cushions for the elbows savor of luxury, and much more pillows for every finger joint. The prophet intended to make a strong case of effeminacy. "The head of every stature" means the heads of people of every height, boys and men of all ages. By "kerchiefs" our translators probably meant head-coverings. The original word favors the sense of quilt, mattress or spread. In the clause rendered "upon the head," perhaps the thought may be that they are large and long enough to cover the entire person, however tall, even to the head. The general sense is, who provide luxuries for the tastes of the people and use their feminine skill to ensnare souls. By yet another special figure, they are thought of as hunters of game, meaning, however, hunters of human souls, to kill those whom they should let live, and to promise life to those whom God would destroy. H. C.

**22.** They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane: You slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not live (verse 19). This is explained (verse 22), "You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; because they would not, they dust not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them, to their great grief and trouble; you put them under inviolous characters, to make them either despicable or odious to the people, and pretended to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them. But, on the other side, and which is still worse, you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, and emboldened them to go on in their wicked ways, and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to. You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them that they shall have peace though they go on, by which their hands have been strengthened and their hearts hardened." H.

The evil of their doings, how they deceived others, and were themselves deceived; the points which alone concern us practically, these are set before us plainly. "With their lies they made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God had not made sad; and they strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." Where the way of life was broad, they strove to make it narrow; and where it was narrow, they strove to make it broad; by their solemn and superstitious lies, they frightened and perplexed the good, while, by their lives of ungodliness, they emboldened and encouraged the wicked.

It may not, at first sight, seem necessary that these two things should go together; there might be, it seems, either the fault of making the heart of the righteous sad, without that of strengthening the hands of the wicked; or there might be the strengthening of the hands of the wicked, without making sad the heart of the righteous. And so it sometimes has been: there has been a wickedness which has not tried to keep up superstition; there has been a superstition, the supporters of which have not wilfully encouraged wickedness. Yet, although this has been so, with respect to the intention of the parties concerned, yet in their own nature, the tendency of either evil to produce the other is sure and universal. We cannot exist without some influences of fear and restraint, on the one hand, and without some indulgence of freedom, on the other. God has provided for both these wants, so to speak, of our nature; He has told us whom we should fear, and where we should be restrained, and where, also, we may be safely in freedom—there is the fruit forbidden, and the fruit which we may eat freely. But if the restraint and the liberty be either of them put in the wrong place, the double evil is sure to follow. Restrained in his lawful liberty, debarr'd from the good and wholesome fruit of the garden, man breaks out into a liberty which is unlawful; he eats of the forbidden fruit, whose taste is death; or, surfeited with an unholy freedom, and let to run wild in a space far too vast for his strength to compass, he turns cravingly for that support to his weariness which a narrowed range would afford him; and he limits himself on that very quarter in which alone he might expatiate freely. Superstition, in fact, is the rest of wickedness, and wickedness is the breaking loose of superstition.

But, however true this may be, are we concerned in it? First of all, when we find an

evil dwelt upon often in the prophets, and find it dwelt upon again by our Lord and His apostles with no less earnestness, there is, at least, a strong presumption, that an evil of this sort is nothing local or passing, but that it is fixed in man's nature, and is apt to grow up in all times and in all countries. Now, the double evil spoken of in the text occurs again in the Gospel; there we find men spoken of who, in like manner, insisted upon what was trifling, and were careless of what was important; and in the epistles we find, again, the same characters holding up as righteous others than those who worked righteousness—men who spoke lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron. We may presume, therefore, that this evil is of an enduring character; but if we look back to the history of the Christian Church, or look around us, the presumption becomes the sad conviction of experience.

*T. Arnold.*

It was a fearfully solemn responsibility assumed by those lying men and women in Ezekiel's day, when they sought thus to thwart the benevolent efforts of the great and holy God. No less solemn to-day is the responsibility assumed by men who abate from the doom threatened against all persistent sinners and encourage men to make the most of sinful pleasures while they can, till the day of mercy ends all suddenly in the night of eternal death!

**Chap. 14.** Again certain of the elders of Israel come and sit before the prophet, and the Lord gives him another message in continuation of the subject of the previous chapter. The Lord will not let men come to Him asking favors, with their idols enthroned in their hearts. If they do, He will answer them according to their idols and abominations. If they seduce a prophet to inquire of the Lord for them, God will let that prophet be deceived and then deceive those who try in this way to make use of His prophetic functions. The only right thing a guilty people can do is to repent of their sins and put away all their abominations. Another turn is given to this leading thought in verses 12-21. If, for the great wickedness of the land, God shall send upon them His sore judgments, He will not be entreated in their behalf. Though even those great and good men, distinguished as intercessors high in favor with God, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should save their own souls only. Their prayers or their presence could not save so wicked a people. II. C.

The preceding prophecy was a reproof of false prophets, this of those who consult them.

The claims of Ezekiel as a prophet are now recognized by his countrymen. Some of the chief exiles come to him as to one who has authority. They look for encouragement and comfort. But Ezekiel with the genuine prophetic spirit sees deep into their hearts, and finds them at variance with devotion to the true God. The idols of self-will and unsubmitiveness are set up therein. The prophet warns them that God will not be inquired of in such a spirit as this. B. C.

**1-3.** "Then came," etc. This seems to have been shortly after the prophecy narrated in the previous chapter. This chapter and that are closely connected in thought. That denunciation of the false prophets may have made some impression upon certain of the elders, and they may have been consequently in an attitude to listen to something further on the same and kindred points. The language, "these men," etc., somewhat strongly implies a reference to the elders then before him. "To set up their idols in their hearts," is precisely to enthrone them there—to give them a standing, a fixed position in their very heart as in a temple prepared for the purpose. "Stumbling-block" is used here in the sense of temptation to sin, put directly before their own face, so that it shall have its greatest power to ensnare and thus destroy their own souls. While they are in this moral state, God asks, "Shall I be inquired of at all by them?" Of course He will not be.

**4, 5.** If such a man shall go to a prophet to engage him to intercede for himself with God, God will answer him through that prophet according to his sins—that is, will give him no such answer as he desires; but will let him be deceived to his ruin. "That I may take," etc., means, that I may take hold violently and effectually of their heart—i.e., by spurning them away and visiting them with sore judgments, grasping their heart so that they shall feel it—taking hold, not to restore or to comfort, but to chasten or punish.

**6.** "Therefore say" this—that there is no evading this manifest and imperative duty of repentance. Seeking God with your abominations still in power in your hearts can be of no avail save to curse you the more fearfully. The effort to reach God through His prophets by seducing them to your aid will only involve those wicked prophets as well as yourself in deception and calamity. "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Repent and turn from all your idols." H. C.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." To

follow the one is to be estranged from and renounce the other. He, therefore, that would repent, must necessarily change his course, and quite turn back again from the broad way, before he can enter into the way of life; he must cast out the idols (of vanity, pleasure, etc.) out of his heart before he can be reconciled to God. For this is a rule in religion which admits of no exception. Repentance is no repentance without a total change, a thorough renovation and real turn of mind. But on these terms a pardon is open to the greatest offender. God is too good and gracious to strike without warning, without a call, without an invitation to repentance; and yet too just and holy to accept a partial conversion, a piece of the heart—He will have the whole or none. *Wagon.*

*Repentance*, taken as a translation of the compound Greek word used in the New Testament to express the same thing, points to an internal alteration, or a thinking differently from some former way of thinking. It means a changed mind, an altered ruling purpose, a new way of looking at things. Used as it is here, it means, of course, a new way of looking at the deepest and greatest thing, the central thing, the object of life, or our relation to God. This change of mind affects the whole judgment, intention, spirit of our being. It implies a turning about in the direction, the drift of a man's innermost life. If he regarded the world, before repentance, as a place merely to get the greatest amount of bodily pleasure in, after repentance he will regard it as the place to get the greatest amount of goodness in; he repents of his sensuality. If he looked upon it before as only a shop for making money, afterward he will look upon it as a mission field for cultivating righteousness; he repents of his sordidness. If he treated his position before as only a dressing-room for ostentation, he will afterward treat it as a vineyard for honest and useful labor; he will repent of his vanity and idleness. If he esteemed men and women before only as beings made to promote his comfort and advance his interests, he will afterward esteem them as beings that he is to comfort and whose interests he is to serve; he will repent of his cupidity and selfishness. And so through the whole circle of virtues and vices, His inmost purpose is changed. Literally, he *thinks the other way*.

Furthermore, as this change of the mind, or of the inner man, affects one's views of the past, as well as of the present and future, it must of course be accompanied with a palpable sorrow that the past life has been what it has, and has

not been what it so plainly ought to be. In a true repentance, this sorrow will be intense and bitter. A sincere and spiritual man cannot but loathe himself for having done those shameful, vicious, ungrateful things. Paul's vivid language of self-condemnation becomes actual and natural to us. We are disgusted with our spiritual meanness. Looking up to Christ and His redeeming love, we are smitten with the disgrace that we should so long have been wounding and insulting Him. Looking to the Holy Spirit, so infinitely tender and forbearing, we feel that the first utterance of prayer must be a confession of unworthiness—a cry for pardon and deliverance from a deserved ruin. And if this grief is not a mere dictate of selfish fear or mercenary calculation, but a *spiritual* penitence because the pure God has been offended and the crucified Christ wronged, then it is that godly sorrow, needing not to be repented of or changed from, which purifies and brings peace and pardon to the heart. This is repentance. F. D. H.

**7, 8.** The meaning of these verses is plain, and has been already brought out. Whether the inquirer be an Israelite or a foreigner, if he sever himself from God and give his heart to idols, and then shall go to a prophet to learn something respecting God, or to gain some favor from God (*e.g.*, like King Saul in his distress), God will answer him in His own way and for His own righteous ends.

**9-11.** What is said here affords no good reason for impugning the justice or even the goodness of God. All candid minds will see this if they carefully consider and duly appreciate these three points: 1. That the case supposed is that of a wicked man, seducing and bribing a prophet to give him a favorable answer from God, while he yet cleaves to his sins. God declares that He will not be tampered with by a wicked man for so vile a purpose. He will let both the prophet and the sinner who tries to bribe him be deceived and ruined. 2. No other form of Divine agency need be implied here than what is properly *permissive*. God will let that prophet be deceived. He will leave him to make mistakes—leave him in the darkness of his own perverse heart. God will not reveal truth to his mind; will not help him carry out the wicked purpose and desire of the sinner who has bribed him to try to extort something from God for his own selfish advantage. The usage of all Scripture, and indeed of all human language, sustains this construction. God is said to *do* what He only *suffers* or *permits* to be done. And in this case, who can say that God

does not most righteously and justly leave the sinner to be frustrated in his impious purpose? 3. The Divine intent in this proceeding is infinitely wise and good. As declared by Himself in this very connection, it is "that the house of Israel may go no more astray from Me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be My people, and I may be their God." H. C.

**9.** *I the Lord have deceived that prophet.* That is, permitted him to be deceived and to deceive the people, as a just judgment upon them for their infidelity, with respect to His true prophets. This He threatens at the fifth verse: "I will take the house of Israel," etc.; because they have chosen to themselves false gods, I will suffer them to be deceived with false prophets; and that this is the meaning appears by the threatening added, "and I will stretch out My hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of My people." Now God will not punish that whereof He is the Author. *Abp. Tillotson.*

Evil as well as good is under His direction who turns it as He will, employing it to test the sincerity of men, and thus making it ultimately contribute to the purification of His people, to the confirmation of the righteous, to the increase of their glory and felicity. This principle of Divine government may be traced elsewhere. In De. 13 it is declared that those who listen to false prophets are responsible, even though the prophets confirm their words by wonders that come to pass. God's people were tried by the presence among them of false prophets just as they were by the presence of idolaters. So John bids men *try the spirits because many false prophets are gone out into the world* (1 John 4: 1), and it is of the days of the Messiah that Zechariah predicts, *I will cause the (false) prophets and unclean spirit to pass out of the land* (Zech. 13: 2). The case of the false prophets who deceived Ahab (1 K. 22) is a striking representation of this principle. The Lord sends forth an evil spirit to persuade him to his ruin.

Toward the close of the kingdom of Judah false prophets were especially rife, the sign and the punishment of corruption. In this way the thoughts of men's hearts were revealed, the good separated from the bad, and the people (the remnant of them) purged from the sins by which of late years the whole nation had been defiled. So Paul makes the sending of *false prophets* a leading part of the Divine dispensations in the last days—*God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie* (2 Thess.

2: 11). Yet this delusion does not operate by a magic irresistible force—they who listen to the false prophets do so of their own will, and will therefore be justly liable to the wrath of the true God. B. C.

**12-23.** The scope of these verses is to show :

1. That national sins bring national judgments ; when virtue is ruined and laid waste, everything else will soon be ruined and laid waste too (verse 13) : When the land sins against Me, when vice and wickedness become epidemic, when the land sins by trespassing grievously, when the sinners are become very numerous, and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail, then will I stretch forth Mine hand upon it for the punishment of it ; the Divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted, the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to all the concerns and interests of the nation. Grievous sins bring grievous plagues. 2. That God has a variety of sore judgments wherewith to punish sinful nations ; and He has them all at command, and inflicts which He pleases. II.

**12-21.** The points of this case are made entirely plain. It is presented for the most part as a *case supposed* in a hypothetical way. If any land should become grievously wicked, beyond the Divine endurance, then would I scourge them with My four great and sore judgments—famine, destructive beasts, the sword of war and pestilence—and then, though these three men, pre-eminent for their availing intercession—viz., Noah, Daniel and Job, were in that land, they should save themselves only ; they could not save that land from My judgments. They could not save from any one of these forms of judgment coming singly—how much less from all combined ? Of the godly men named here, the reader will recall in the case of Noah the fact that God forewarned him of the flood one hundred and twenty years before it came, during which time we may suppose that his prayers were unceasing that the Lord would defer this judgment and spare the guilty race. So far “the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” The fact was, that the sins of the Jewish people had become such that God could not pardon, but must punish. So He had said of the sins of Manasseh (2 K. 24 : 4). Repeatedly through Jeremiah the Lord had signified that He could not hear prayer in their behalf to turn from His purposed judgments. (See Jer. 7 : 16 ; 11 : 14 ; 14 : 11, 12, and not least, 15 : 1.) “Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me” (*i.e.*, as intercessors),

“yet My mind could not be toward this people ; cast them out of My sight and let them go forth.” Fearful is the doom that awaits either a nation or an individual when the point is reached where prayer avails nothing ! II. C.

When a nation is loyal to its God, by putting away sin and nurturing righteousness it will insure the Divine blessing and its own permanence (verse 9). God reserves the entry through the gates of honor to “the righteous nation which keepeth the truth.” The elevation ensured and given to nations which promote righteousness is the one which, if we see as God sees, we shall value most. Godless men may covet an ascendancy backed by guns and swords, armies and fleets. The believer in God covets only an uplifting that comes of the Divine blessing on “a wise and understanding people.” If loyalty to God and truth is wanting, a nation ensures its own downfall (verse 10 ; see Ezek. 17 : 27 : 3 ; 28 : 2-10 ; Amos 2 : 9 ; Obad. 3, 4). Christians are the “salt” of the earth. Their value is in their “savor,” not in their name. And if they let the “savor” die out, no name of discipleship will be of any use to them. Christians may not separate their Christianity from their citizenship. They are to be Christian citizens ; and do we not learn by abundant teachings in the Old and New Testament that God spares many a guilty city for the sake of the righteous that are therein ? And can we forget the teaching of the prophet Ezekiel, that nations may become so corrupt that even the righteous element therein avails not to stay the ruin (Ezek. 14 : 12-21) ? C. C.

**11.** *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it.* Daniel was then in captivity ; he was taken in the third year of Jehoiakim ; after this Jehoiakim reigned eight years ; and this prophecy, as appears from chap. 8 : 1, was uttered in the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, who succeeded Jehoiakim, and reigned only three months ; therefore at this time Daniel had been fourteen years in captivity, and was little more than thirty years of age. It is observable how early the fame of his piety had spread over Chaldea. *Abp. Newcome.*

All these persons were eminent for their piety. Noah and his family were saved from the universal deluge, and obtained a promise from the Most High that He would never again destroy the world by an inundation of water. Daniel interceded with the Almighty for the whole nation of the Jews, and obtained a promise of their restoration (Dan. 9). And Job was appointed by God Himself to make intercession

for his three friends. But when the Almighty's irreversible decree is gone out against a nation, even the prayers of such favorites of Heaven would be ineffectual to procure their deliverance. The prophet, in this allusion to Abraham's intercession for Sodom, declares from God that when His judgments come out against the land of Judea, the righteous found in it should only save themselves; which plainly shows a providence extending to particulars. *Bp. Warburton.*

What makes that testimony more striking is that it was borne when Daniel was still in early manhood. When he was about twenty-nine years of age Ezekiel uttered in the course of a prophecy these words: "The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out Mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." Four times are these saints introduced to give point and terror to Divine threatening. A few years later, when Daniel was about thirty-five years of age, his name was introduced into a rebuke, ironical in form, of the then king of Tyre. The king had all but deified himself, and placed his human, heathen wisdom in antagonism with that of God. He had forgotten his dependence upon God; and so the prophet, with biting irony, thus addresses him: "Behold! thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they cannot hide from thee." These references to the then living statesman and prophet are very remarkable. *Pusey.*

From this account we may infer that Job was as *real* a person as Noah or Daniel; and of their identity no man has pretended to doubt.

When God, as above, has determined to punish a nation, no intercession shall avail. *Personal holiness* alone can prevent these evils; but the holiness of any man can only avail for himself.

**21.** *My four sore judgments.* Sword, war. Famine, occasioned by drought. Pestilence, epidemic diseases which sweep off a great part of the inhabitants of a land. The noisome beasts, the multiplication of wild beasts in consequence of the general destruction of the inhabitants. A. C.

**22, 23.** He says to these elders now before him: "When ye see this last company of captives, and learn from personal observation the horrible corruption of their hearts and lives, ye will be comforted concerning the evil which God has brought on Jerusalem, for ye will see that it must have been richly deserved, and that God did not scourge that city to its utter destruction without good cause." If they had felt any misgiving in view of a judgment so terrible, they would surely see in the character of the captives that God had amply justifying cause for the severity of those judgments. It is a comfort to the people of God to see that His most terrible judgments are not excessive or in any wise unduly severe. The Lord is careful to show His confiding people that whatever else He may do, He never can punish *too severely*. He may punish *less* than man's iniquities deserve; but never more. H. C.

**23.** *Ye shall know that I have not done without cause.* There is no part of the conduct of God toward man that is not dictated by the purest principles of *justice, equity* and *truth*. He does nothing but what is *right*; and whatever is right to be done, that *ought* to be done. In God's *justice* there is no *severity*; in God's *mercy* there is no *caprice*. He alone doth all things *well*; for He is the Fountain of justice and mercy. A. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XV., XVI.

**15:1, 2** AND the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to make any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? **4** Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel: the fire hath devoured both the ends of it, and the **5** midst of it is burned: is it profitable for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned, shall it **6** yet be meet for any work? Therefore thus saith the Lord God: As the vine tree among the

trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them; they shall go forth from the fire, but the fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God.

**16** : 1, 2 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem: Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to cleanse thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, for that thy person was abhorred, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee weltering in thy blood, I said unto thee, *Though thou art in thy blood, live*; yea, I said unto thee, *Though thou art in thy blood, live*. I caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou didst increase and wax great, and thou attainedst to excellent ornament; thy breasts were fashioned, and thine hair was grown; yet thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with sealskin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a ring upon thy nose, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper unto royal estate. And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect, through my majesty which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

But thou didst trust in thy beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy whoredoms on every one that passed by; his it was. And thou didst take of thy garments, and madest for thee high places decked with divers colours, and playedst the harlot upon them: *the like things* shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou didst also take thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest for thee images of men, and didst play the harlot with them; and thou tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them, and didst set mine oil and mine incense before them. My bread also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou didst even set it before them for a sweet savour, and *thus* it was; saith the Lord God. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Were thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain my children, and delivered them up, in causing them to pass through *the fire* unto them? And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast weltering in thy blood. And it is come to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord God,) that thou hast built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a lofty place in every street. Thou hast built thy lofty place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty an abomination, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredom. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians, thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast multiplied thy whoredom, to provoke me to anger. Behold therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary *food*, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. Thou hast played the harlot also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet thou wast not satisfied.

Thou hast moreover multiplied thy whoredom in the land of Canaan, unto Chaldaea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith. How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman; in that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thy lofty place in every street;

32 and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire. A wife that committeth adultery !  
33 that taketh strangers instead of her husband ! They give gifts to all harlots : but thou  
givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and bribest them, that they may come unto thee on every  
34 side for thy whoredoms. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms,  
in that none followeth thee to commit whoredom : and whereas thou givest hire, and no hire  
is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

35, 36 Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord : Thus saith the Lord God, because thy  
filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy  
lovers ; and because of all the idols of thy abominations, and for the blood of thy children,  
37 which thou didst give unto them ; therefore behold, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom  
thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast  
hated ; I will even gather them against thee on every side, and will discover thy nakedness  
38 unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. And I will judge thee, as women that  
break wedlock and shed blood are judged ; and I will bring upon thee the blood of fury and  
39 jealousy. I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent  
place, and break down thy lofty places ; and they shall strip thee of thy clothes, and take  
40 thy fair jewels : and they shall leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up an as-  
sembly against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their  
41 swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgements upon thee in  
the sight of many women ; and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou  
42 shalt also give no hire any more. So will I satisfy my fury upon thee, and my jealousy  
43 shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. Because thou hast  
not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things ; therefore be-  
hold, I also will bring thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord God : and thou shalt not  
commit *this* lewdness above all thine abominations.

44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use *this* proverb against thee, saying, As is  
45 the mother, so is her daughter. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband  
and her children ; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and  
46 their children : your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And thine elder  
sister is Samaria, that dwelleth at thy left hand, she and her daughters ; and thy younger  
47 sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters. Yet hast thou not  
walked in their ways, nor done after their abominations ; but, as *if that were* a very little  
48 thing, thou wast more corrupt than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord God,  
Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy  
49 daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom ; pride, fulness of bread, and  
prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters ; neither did she strengthen the hand of the  
50 poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me : therefore  
51 I took them away as I saw good. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins ; but thou  
hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters by all thine  
52 abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, bear thine own shame, in that thou hast  
given judgement for thy sisters ; through thy sins that thou hast committed more abomi-  
nable than they, they are more righteous than thou : yea, be thou also confounded, and bear  
53 thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. And I will turn again their captivity, the  
captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and  
54 the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them : that thou mayest bear thine own shame,  
and mayest be ashamed because of all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto  
55 them. And thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and  
Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, and thou and thy daughters  
56 shall return to your former estate. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth  
57 in the day of thy pride ; before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of the reproach  
of the daughters of Syria, and of all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philis-  
58 tines, which do despite unto thee round about. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine  
59 abominations, saith the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God : I will even deal with thee as  
60 thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant. Nevertheless I will  
remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an  
61 everlasting covenant. Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou  
shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder sisters and thy younger : and I will give them unto thee



62 for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee ; and  
63 thou shalt know that I am the Lord : that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and  
never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame ; when I have forgiven thee all that  
thou hast done, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 15.** This short chapter makes but one point, and makes that plainly. Jerusalem and Israel had often been thought and spoken of as a *vine* under the culture of their own God. (See Isa. 5 : 1-7 ; 27 : 2 ; Jer. 2 : 21 ; Ps. 80 : 8-16.) But now she has altogether ceased to bring forth grapes. She bears no fruits of holiness ; renders to God no acceptable service. The wood of the vine was too slender for tent nails or pins. It might, however, answer to burn for fuel. It was used for this purpose, and was fit for nothing else. So of the people of Jerusalem. They might serve as an example to illustrate God's justice in punishing the incorrigibly guilty. They might answer some useful purpose to *burn up*. To this purpose the Lord would consign them, and would lay their land utterly desolate. A fearful truth is this, as applied to all sinners who will bear no fruit of obedience and love to God ; from whom He can extract no other service in His universe save to make them an example of His righteous justice in their damnation ! Actively, of their free will and honest intent, they will do nothing for God, or for His creatures and the general good ; hence, passively, by suffering, and against their will, the Lord will turn them to the only good account possible in their case, and make them fuel for His justice to burn—a living, eternal testimony before the universe to His holy and intense abhorrence of rebellion. They shall know, and all intelligent beings in God's kingdom shall learn in their case, that He is the Lord God Omnipotent, holy and righteous forevermore ! H. C.

The vine is a noble plant in respect to the fruit it bears ; but in regard of its wood, no shrub is so mean ; it is so far from affording any useful timber, that not even a pin can be made from it on which any vessel may be hung. Lo, such is Israel ! if it bore good fruit it would be dear and precious to me, but in itself it is but mean and base in comparison of other nations, and unfit for any service : it is only meet to be cast into the fire for fuel. *Ips. Hall.*

The vine-tree is weaker than most trees, so as to be unfit for any work, and would therefore be very contemptible but for that property it possesses of bringing forth a valuable and delicious fruit. On this account it is highly prized and diligently cultivated. But if it fail

of producing fruit, the only purpose to which it can be applied is to turn it to fuel. Such is the figurative representation which the prophet gives us, in this passage, of man, considered especially as the object of Divine care and culture. He is naturally capable of yielding a precious fruit ; in this consists his sole excellence ; this is the sole end of his existence ; and if he fails in this he is of no use but to be destroyed. Man is naturally capable of yielding a most precious fruit : this fruit consists in living to God. *R. Hall.*

**7.** The condition of the people is here depicted. The people of Israel had already become worthless, useless as instruments for carrying out God's work. The separated kingdoms had, in turn, been laid waste. Israel was entirely broken up. Judah had suffered the captivity of her king (Jehoiachin), and with him no inconsiderable part of the commonalty. The branch torn from the living stem had truly been cast into the fire, which had devoured both ends of it ; what remained was a brand plucked from the burning. Those who had escaped the general calamity were reserved for a like fate. *They had gone forth from the fire*, so they deemed, but *the fire should yet devour them*, so God had decreed. Compare the parable of the vine in John 15, where the worthlessness of the vine-branch severed from the true stock, and the consequent casting of it in the fire, illustrates this prophecy of Ezekiel. B. C.

**Chap. 16.** This chapter embraces one general theme—the idolatry of Jerusalem, set forth in vivid, glaring, appalling colors under the figure common to the prophets, by which idolatry is thought of as adultery. The key-note is struck in verse 2 : " Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." Set them before her eyes in forms and figures so expressive that she cannot but see them, and so sickening that, seeing, she cannot fail to loathe and abhor herself for all she has done. Let us also bear in mind that this *expose* of Jerusalem is made before the exiles in Chaldaea to show them how righteously that city is about to suffer utter destruction ; to impress them with the enormity of their great national sin, in which themselves were deeply guilty ; and to urge them to deep self-condemnation and bitter repentance. H. C.

Israel's proneness to idolatry is depicted by the prophet under the figure of a wife's infidel-

ity. This he does in the long 16th chapter and in the almost equally long 23d chapter. In these chapters the relentless realism of our author's methods is most startling. The subject is a loathsome one. The instinct of delicacy is to escape from it as speedily and euphemistically as possible. But Ezekiel means not merely to suggest the picture, but to make us see it. We feel that we might be spared some of the ranker words, some of the more revolting situations, some of the more indecent exposures. It is dreadful to read, but the result is such an expression of the odiousness of apostasy from God as is without a parallel in literature. *Bal-lantine*.

**1-13.** Idolatry is frequently represented by the prophets under the figure of a wife's unfaithfulness to her husband. This image is here so portrayed as to exhibit the aggravation of Israel's guilt by reason of her origin and early history. The original abode of the progenitors of the race, the land of Canaan, defiled with idolatry and moral corruption, is introduced to heighten the picture. The prophet's first aim is to show how utterly destitute the people was from the first of any claim to the kindness lavished upon it. Israel was like a child born in a polluted land, abandoned from its birth, left by its parents in the most utter neglect to the chance regard of any passer by. Such was the state of the people in Egypt (verses 3-5). On such a child the Lord looked with pity, tended, adopted it, decked it with all that could grace and adorn it. Under such care it grew up to be comely and beautiful, and the Lord joined it to Himself in that close union which is figured by the bonds of wedlock. The Lord adopted her not only as His child, but as His spouse. The covenants made under Moses and Joshua represent this alliance (verses 6-8). The prophet does not dwell upon the sins and punishments of Israel which followed so close upon the first covenants, but passes on to the season of greatest prosperity, the reigns of David and Solomon, when Israel shone with all the glory of temporal prosperity, and became a kingdom mighty and prosperous (verses 9-14). The remainder of the history of the people now divided is, in the prophet's eye, a succession of defection and degradation marked by the erection of high places (verse 16), by the worship of household idols (verse 17), by the abominable rites of Molech (verse 20). And all this was followed by unholy alliances with foreign nations: Egypt (verse 26), Assyria (verse 28), Chaldea (verse 29), which nations the people courted with presents and called in to

their ruin (verse 33). Such sins were soon to meet their due punishment. As an unfaithful wife was brought before the people, convicted, cast out of her home, and stoned, so should the Lord make His people a gazing-stock to all the nations round about, deprive them of all their possessions, and of their city, and cast them forth as exiles to be spoiled and destroyed in a foreign land (verses 35-43). B. C.

**1-5.** Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon; but as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives, though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them (chap. 29), so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though Jeremiah himself was resident there. Jeremiah wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed. H.

**3.** No one will take this allusion to her "birth and nativity" in the literal sense. Men and nations are spoken of as the children of those whose ways they follow, as our Lord accosted the Pharisees, "Ye generation of vipers" (Matt. 23 : 33), and "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8 : 44). Isaiah (chap. 1 : 10) addresses the Jews as "rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah." H. C.

*Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan.* It would dishonor Abraham to say that you sprung from him; ye are rather *Canaanites* than *Israelites*. The Canaanites were accursed; so are ye. *Thy father was an Amorite, thy mother a Hittite*. These tribes were the most famous, and probably the most corrupt of all the Canaanites. A. C.

**6-11.** These figures are plain, and refer manifestly to the early development of the religious life and of the national strength and wealth of the Hebrew people in the wilderness and in Canaan. God's first interposition broke the yoke of Pharaoh and brought them forth from their national bondage. Then He entered into the solemn marriage covenant with them, and they became truly and avowedly His own people. The entire Book of Exodus is a special comment on these verses. In verse 6 the original word is not precisely "polluted," but rather *tradden under foot*—indicating their state in Egypt. The announcement, "Live," is solemnly repeated for emphasis. It was this majestic and paternal voice which restored their national life, when else they had died nationally under Egyptian servitude. The reader will not fail to note that this setting forth of God's loving-kindness to the nation in its birth and

youth is intended to show (and does) how deeply indebted the Hebrew nation were to their own covenant God, and hence, how intensely flagrant, mean and wicked was their apostasy from their own God to idols, their spiritual adultery. H. C.

**15-34.** In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great favors that God had conferred upon them, by which, one would think, they should have been forever engaged to Him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lewd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind friend and benefactor, that had been in all respects as a father and a husband to her. H.

The prophet now describes the idolatries of the time of the kings. The earlier offences in the time of the judges are not noticed, that being an unsettled time. The conduct of the people after they had *prospered into a kingdom* is to be described.

**15.** *Because of thy renown.* Thou didst make use of thy renown to court idolatrous nations. The marriages of Solomon with heathen wives, and his consequent idolatries, are a clear instance of such misuse of glory. B. C.

**18.** *Mine oil and Mine incense.* The oil was the product of the land, the *incense* received in exchange for such produce, and so both were the gifts of Jehovah, and belonged to Him. Besides, the oil and the incense prepared for the service of God were used in idol worship. *Oil* was a special ingredient in the offerings prescribed in the service of the Temple; for anointing, for lights, and for the meal-offering. B. C.

**20, 21.** Was this crime of making and serving other gods too small a thing to satisfy thy wicked heart, that thou shouldst needs go on to more horrid guilt, and burn thine own sons and daughters in the fire to these cruel idols? With equal force and beauty the Lord says, "Thou hast slain *My* children"—as if His parental heart yearned over the innocent little ones hurled by their unnatural fathers and mothers into the deadly fire to Moloch and Saturn! H. C.

God's covenant with Abraham was "with him and his seed after him." The severest charge against Israel which Ezekiel was commissioned to utter was this: "Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters whom thou *hast borne unto Me*, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them. Thou hast slain *My* children." Take now these facts and principles: Christian

families as families are in covenant with God. God claims the children in such families as His children; the family is, practically, whatever may be our theories, the unit of organization in the Church as in the commonwealth, lying as it does at the foundation of them both. These principles furnish strong *a priori* or presumptive evidence that the children of believing parents are to be acknowledged as members of the Christian Church. T. P. Stevenson.

**22.** It had aggravated her guilt all along that she would not suitably remember the goodness of her God manifested toward her in the early days of her national life. In this chapter (verses 4-14) the Lord has been pressing this urgently upon her attention. This was the burden of many an earnest exhortation from the Lord through Moses and the prophets. (See De. 8:2; 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22.) She did not love to remember how abject and forlorn she was in the day when the mercy of the Lord met her in Egypt. So sinners are slow and reluctant to remember the special favors shown them by that Great Benefactor whose name they revile, whose law they disregard, and whose love to them they will not think of requiting with responsive love in return. H. C.

**27.** *The Philistines*, occupying the southern borders of the land of Canaan, were from the first, and continued through the whole of Israel's history, thorns in the sides of the people; in the times of the judges, of Samuel, of Saul, of David, and in much later times (see Isa. 14:29) they were the instruments employed by the Lord to punish His disobedient people. (See 2 Chron. 28:18.)

**35-43.** The punishment of Judah is represented by the same figure as her sin. She has been portrayed as an adulteress and a murderess. She is now represented as undergoing the punishment adjudged to an adulteress and murderess. The scene is a court of justice, before which the Lord Himself appears to arraign the guilty woman. There are present those who are now her lovers, and those whom she has loved and deserted (the idolatrous nations with whom Judah has had guilty intercourse), to witness, to share, or to exult in her disgrace. In proportion to her former honor shall be her present shame. As a woman suspected of infidelity to her husband had her head uncovered, by way of disgrace, so this convicted adulteress shall be stripped bare, exposed to utter shame, shall be stoned and slain, and her house shall be made desolate. Only in her utter destruc-

tion shall the wrath of the Lord, the jealous God, cease. B. C.

In this passage, verse 38 alludes with terrible power to the jealousy and fury with which men often avenge the crime of adultery when their own hearts are torn and their own homes ruined by it. So God will shed the blood of Jerusalem in His fury and jealousy! What could be more fearfully expressive! He will make an example of her before many cities and nations. H. C.

The question is, how these two, God is love and God is a consuming fire, are to be harmonized. And the answer is, that the vinculum is found in this conception of the jealousy. Through that medial factor, the wrath is seen to be of love or accordant with it. The capital passage here is De. 4:24, where the one is given as exegetical of the other: "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God;" and other passages (Zech. 8:2; Ezek. 16:38; 26:6; 38:19, etc.) place the two in such juxtaposition that sometimes they appear well-nigh synonymous, and sometimes the jealousy seems given as the operative cause of the wrath. This jealousy is, therefore, the Divine love bearing no rival, demanding a perfect response, asserting its disowned claims; in short, the love that will be loved, and that with an undivided affection, in turn. *Salmond.*

**46, 47.** To humble the national pride of Jerusalem and set forth her monstrous guilt, she is compared to Samaria as her sister on the left hand, and to Sodom, her sister on the right. Jerusalem sits geographically between these two cities, with her face to the east. "She did not walk after their ways," for she had done indefinitely worse than they. So utterly had her crimes surpassed theirs, as to throw them quite into the shade. In verse 47, the original word, rendered "a very little thing," means a *thing of disgust*, as if it disgusted her as *too small sinning*. Jerusalem piques herself upon sinning on a grander scale, with more daring, horrible impiety!

**48-50.** This comparison with Sodom is full of intense significance and power. There stood the history of Sodom and her fearful doom before the very eyes of the Jewish people. The record of it lifts up its columns of smoke and flame before the generations of history, standing on their own sacred page, and it would seem that they must have learned from their childhood to abhor such crimes and dread such a doom! Yet here the burning tongue of their prophet puts it to them that their own guilt is indefinitely greater! H. C.

**49. Abundance of idleness.** In places where there is least work the worst sins do most prevail; and idleness therefore is by the prophet reckoned one of the three great sins of Sodom, parents of the rest. It seldom happens in any way of life that a sluggard and a profligate do not go together, or that he who is idle is not also dissolute. *Isaac Barrow.*

**51, 52.** Jerusalem in her abominations had justified Samaria only in the sense that her greater crimes made the sins of Samaria appear to be almost virtues. Verse 52 might be translated, "Bear thou (Jerusalem) that disgrace which thou hast adjudged to thy sisters, for thy sins in which thou hast been more abominable than they," etc. Jerusalem had condemned her sisters, Sodom and Samaria, adjudging to them deep disgrace. Let her bear all this herself and more, for her greater abominations. H. C.

**53. When I shall bring again their captivity.** The meaning is, When the fulness of the Gentiles shall come into the Church (some of whom may be compared to Sodom for wickedness), then will I also remember you who are My ancient people. The conversion of the Gentiles is expressed in Jeremiah by the returning of the captivity of Moab, Ammon and Elam (chaps. 48:47; 49:6, 39); and by the Egyptians, Ethiopians and Syrians acknowledging themselves His servants in the prophecy of Isaiah (chaps. 19:24, 25; 23:18). And by the same analogy we are to understand the returning of "the captivity of Sodom," here, of the Gentiles coming into the Church. *Abb. Newcome.*

**56-59.** Her guilt in despising her oath and breaking her covenant with her God was that especially which so greatly surpassed the guilt of Sodom and Samaria, and which made her doom so dreadful. H. C.

**60-63.** Here in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved for those who shall come after, as was when God swore in His wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt, that they should not enter into Canaan. "Yet," says God, "your little ones shall;" so here. This mercy should take rise from God Himself and His remembering of His covenant with them (verse 60). Nevertheless, though they had been so provoking, and God has been so provoked, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet "I will remember My covenant with thee, that covenant which I made with thee in

the days of thy youth, and will revive it again. Though thou hast broken the covenant (verse 59), I will remember it, and it shall flourish again." II.

What unutterable compassion and forgiving love are in these words ! Thou, Jerusalem, wilt not remember the days of thy youth and of My mercy to thee then ; but I will remember My covenant with thee, made in those days of thy youth, and I will establish it with thee for an everlasting covenant ! Is not such love as this *sovereign*—a love that owes nothing to antecedent love on the part of His people, but lifts itself high above the mountains of sin and spans the deep abysses of guilt and the sinks of human abominations to find subjects on which loving-kindness and Divine compassion may rest ! Oh, indeed, this is the loving-kindness of the ever-blessed God ! Well may it be said, "The Lord is pitiful and of tender mercy. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." II. C.

63. God's assurance, "I have forgiven," the assurance that we do not need to plead with Him, to bribe Him, to buy pardon by tears and amendment, but that it is already provided for us—the blessed vision of an all-mighty love treasured in a dying Saviour, the proclamation "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"—oh, these are the powers that break, or rather that melt our hearts ; these are the keen weapons that wound to heal our hearts ; these

are the teachers that teach a godly sorrow that needeth not to be repented of. Think of all the patient, pitying mercy of our Father, with which He has lingered about our lives, and softly knocked at the door of our hearts ! Think of that unspeakable gift in which are wrapped up all His tender mercies—the gift of Christ, who died for us all ! Let it smite upon your heart with a rebuke mightier than all the thunders of law or terrors of judgment. Let it unveil for you not only the depths of the love of God, but the darkness of your own selfish rebellion from Him. Measure your crooked lives by the perfect rightness of Christ's. Learn how you have missed the aim which He reached, who could say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." And let that same infinite love that teaches sin announce frank forgiveness and prophesy perfect purity. Then, with heart fixed upon Christ's cross, let your cry for pardon be the echo of the most sure promise of pardon which sounds from His dying lips ; and as you gaze on Him who died that we might be freed from all iniquity, ask Him to blot out your transgressions, to wash you thoroughly from your iniquity, and to cleanse you from your sins. Ask, for you cannot ask in vain ; ask earnestly, for you need it sorely ; ask confidently, for He has promised before you ask ; but ask, for unless you do, you will not receive. Ask, and the answer is sent already : "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." A. M.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XVII.

17 : 1, 2 AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel ; and say, Thus saith the Lord God : A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the top of the cedar : he cropped off the topmost of the young twigs thereof, and carried it into a land of traffic ; he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful soil ; he placed it beside many waters : he set it as a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him : so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers : and, behold, this vine did bend its roots toward him, and shot forth its branches toward him, from the beds of its plantation, that he might water it. And it was planted in a good soil by many waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God : Shall it prosper ? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it may wither ; that all its fresh springing leaves may wither ; even without great power or much people to pluck it up by the roots thereof ? Yea, behold, being planted, shall it

prosper ? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it ? it shall wither in the beds where it grew.

11, 12 More-over the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean ? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and brought them to him to Babylon ; and he took of the seed royal, and made a covenant with him ; he also brought him under an oath, and took away the mighty of the land : that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand. But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper ? shall he escape that doeth such things ? shall he break the covenant, and yet escape ? As I live, saith the LORD God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, when they cast up mounds and build forts, to cut off many persons. For he hath despised the oath by breaking the covenant ; and behold, he had given his hand, and yet hath done all these things ; he shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the LORD God : As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will even bring it upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. And all his fugitives in all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward every wind : and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

22 Thus saith the LORD God : I will also take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it ; I will crop off from the topmost of his young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent : in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it ; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar : and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing ; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish : I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

**Chap. 17.** Ezekiel, after describing by a figure the circumstances and conditions of the Jews and Zedekiah, the vassal of the Assyrian monarch, warns them of the delusive character of their hopes of help from Egypt, protests against the perfidy which must accompany such alliance, and points out that the restoration of the people of God will be effected under a very different prince from Zedekiah. There will indeed in future times be deliverance, and a free and mighty kingdom governed by a son of David, under whose shadow all the inhabitants will gather themselves as subjects. The close of this chapter is a most striking prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah. B. C.

The riddle or parable which constitutes the subject throughout this chapter is explained in the chapter itself, verses 11-21. This explanation makes the significance entirely clear and certain. The first eagle (verses 3-6) is Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ; the second (verse 7) is Pharaoh of Egypt. The highest branch of the cedar cropped by the first eagle and carried to a land of traffic, etc (verses 3, 4), was Jehoiachin, taken from the throne of Judah into captivity to Babylon. Then " the seed of the land,

planted in a fruitful field, by great waters, and becoming a spreading vine of low stature (verses 5, 6), was Zedekiah, made king by Nebuchadnezzar over the remnant left in the land. He was, of course, bound by solemn covenant to a faithful allegiance to his conqueror and sovereign. Turning toward Egypt to solicit help thence that he might maintain himself in breaking faith with the king of Babylon was base treachery and rebellion, which God will punish.

1-4. This representation partakes of the nature of both the riddle and the parable. In its points of analogy it is a parable ; in its enigma—in the fact that its significance is somewhat recondite and obscure—it is a riddle. The eagle, king of birds, not unfitly represents the kings of Chaldea and Egypt. So also a tree, whether the cedar or the vine-tree, with its magnificent foliage and abundant fruit, making homes and furnishing food for whole families of birds, not unaptly represents a great king, the father of his people. This figure was not altogether foreign to Chaldea, for we find it applied beautifully to Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4. H.C.

4. " A land of traffic, a city of merchants."

This allusion to the commercial character of Babylon does not stand alone and unsupported in Scripture. Isaiah speaks of the Babylonian "merchants" (Isa. 47:15), and describes the Chaldeans as persons "whose cry is in their ships" (chap. 43:14). Ezekiel mentions Canneh (Calneh) and Chilmad, Babylonian towns, among the places that carried on commercial dealings with Tyre (27:23). In the Revelation of John, Babylon is made the type of a city, which is represented as eminently commercial (Rev. 18:12, 13). The notices of Babylon in profane writers and in the inscriptions fully bear out the character thus assigned to her, showing that she was the centre of an enormous land and sea commerce, which must have given occupation to thousands of merchants, and have necessitated the employment of numerous ships. G. R.

**5.** *He took also of the seed of the land.* Zedekiah, the king's uncle, not a Babylonian satrap, was made king. This shoot is not planted like a cedar on the top of a mountain, but in low ground, *by great waters, like a willow tree*, to be fruitful indeed and no more. (See verse 14.) B. C.

**5, 6.** This eagle (Nebuchadnezzar) now takes of the seed of the land a scion of the royal family of Judah, and plants it under favorable auspices in a fruitful field and by abundant waters, where it might become, not indeed a great cedar, but a humble yet useful vine. If Zedekiah had remained true to his sovereign, and especially, if true also to God, he and his people might have enjoyed a career of honor and prosperity. His comparatively humble condition—a vine of low stature—looks to the fact that all the chief princes and the more active, intelligent and useful citizens had been taken to Babylon as captives. (See 2 K. 24:14-16; Jer. 24.)

**7, 8.** The historical facts represented here are simply that Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and sent ambassadors to Egypt for aid. This policy the Lord by His prophet sharply condemned. It was the burden of repeated remonstrances through Jeremiah.

**9, 10.** The Lord now begins to make the moral application of this parable. Shall such treachery prosper? Can such ingratitude and baseness result well in the end? Will not the first great eagle (Nebuchadnezzar) take revenge upon this vine (Zedekiah), tear it up by its roots and leave it to wither and die? The passage intimates that this will be done easily. Judah was now greatly reduced in military strength by the loss of her citizens already

taken captive; by her immoralities; and not least, by God's wrath against her. The king of Babylon could easily punish her "without great power or many people to pluck her up by her roots."

**11-16.** This explanation is itself plain, and most amply unfolds the meaning of this riddle or parable. The great facts of Zedekiah's treachery were just about transpiring now in the sixth year of his reign. It was essential that the exiles in Chaldea should know these facts, and should see the justice of God's wrath against Zedekiah and his people for this rebellion against the king of Babylon. Hence this representation held a vitally important place in Ezekiel's prophecies to his captive brethren. Verse 16 disclosed to them the pertinent prophecy that King Zedekiah should be brought to the place where his real sovereign lived, under the power of the king against whom he had perjured himself and whose covenant he had broken, and should die there in Babylon. This announcement must have sufficed to crush out any fond hopes they might have had as to the reign of Zedekiah.

**17-21.** The help of Egypt, though promised him, should avail nothing. Deservedly this passage lays stress upon the treachery and rebellion of Zedekiah as the ground of the Lord's last judgments on himself, his family and his throne. So true and right it is that God holds even kings to the morality of good faith in their solemn compacts. H. C.

Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God will recompense upon His own head (verse 19), the trespass which he has trespassed against God, for which God will plead with him (verse 20). Perjury is a heinous sin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse. 1. That he who took this oath was a king, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might surely set him above the obligation of oaths; no, though kings are gods to us, they are men to God, and not exempt from His law and judgment. The prince is doubtless as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation oath as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. 2. Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince; no, though Nebuchadnezzar was a worshipper of false gods, yet the true God will avenge His quarrel when one of His worshippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt owing to all men; and if the professors of the true religion deal perfidiously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from

excusing, much less justifying them, that it aggravates their sin, and God will the more surely and severely punish it because by it they give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mohammedan prince who, when the Christians broke their league with him, cried out, "O Jesus, are these Thy Christians?" 3 Nor would it justify him that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was made upon a valuable consideration. He held his life and crown upon this condition, that he should be faithful and bear true allegiance to the king of Babylon; and if he enjoyed the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust if he do not observe the terms. Let him know then that, having despised the oath and broken the covenant, he shall not escape. And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this, would be so punished, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who break covenant with God (when lo, they had given their hand upon it that they would be faithful), who tread under foot the blood of that covenant as an unholy thing? Betwixt the covenants there is no comparison. II.

22. There is a contrast between the dealings of Nebuchadnezzar and of Jehovah. Nebuchadnezzar *cut off*, Jehovah will *set up* the top shoot; Nebuchadnezzar *carried it into a land of traffic*, Jehovah will *plant it in the mountain of the height of Israel*. Nebuchadnezzar set his favorite as a *vine*, *lovely* though not poor, in the place where such trees as the humble *willow* grow and thrive. Jehovah's favorite is like the *lofty cedar*, *eminent upon a high mountain*. B. C.

22-24. There can be no good reason to doubt the application of these verses to the

then future Messiah. All the kings of David's line were in the succession of promise between him and his greater Son. Hence the sad fall of the two last prior to the Captivity afforded a pertinent occasion for thus alluding to the greater glories—never to be despaired of—that were sure to the future Zion in her blessed King. The hopes of God's people need not go down in the eclipse that came over the royal house of David through the crimes, the captivity, the death of these two kings. Their doom forcibly suggested the contrasted destiny of "the righteous branch" that should reign and prosper and fill the earth with His blessings. The Lord could not forego such an opportunity for promises so timely, so refreshing, so inspiring to His true people in all ages. H. C.

Whereas the judgments threatened in this chapter might seem to indicate the utter extirpation of the seed of David, the Lord is here pleased to assure its continuance, and the raising of the Messiah from that house, according to promise. And thus this prophecy, as well as that contained in the last chapter, closes its denunciation of woes with a striking passage relating to the kingdom of Christ. *Psalm*.

God Himself will herein be glorified (verse 24). The setting up of the Messiah's kingdom in the world shall discover more clearly than ever to the children of men that God is the King of all the earth (Ps. 47:7). Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wise and mighty Providence, than that which was given by the exaltation of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in His hand, and the sovereign disposal of all affairs. II.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XVIII.

18: 1, 2 THE word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and 3 the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occa- 4 sion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the 5 father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man 6 be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his 7 neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a woman in her separation; and hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath 8 given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not



given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from  
 9 iniquity, hath executed true judgement between man and man, hath walked in my statutes,  
 and hath kept my judgements, to deal truly ; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord  
 10 God. If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth any one of these  
 11 things, and that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and  
 12 defiled his neighbour's wife, hath wronged the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath  
 not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,  
 13 hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase : shall he then live ? he shall not live ;  
 14 he hath done all these abominations : he shall surely die ; his blood shall be upon him. Now,  
 15 lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth  
 16 not such like, that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the  
 17 idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath wronged any,  
 hath not taken ought to pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread  
 18 to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, that hath withdrawn his hand  
 from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgements, hath  
 19 walked in my statutes ; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.  
 As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that  
 20 which is not good among his people, behold, he shall die in his iniquity. Yet say ye, Where-  
 fore doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father ? When the son hath done that which is  
 lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.  
 21 The soul that sinneth, it shall die : the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither  
 shall the father bear the iniquity of the son ; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon  
 22 him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked turn from all  
 his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and  
 23 right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath com-  
 mitted shall be remembered against him : in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.  
 24 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked ? saith the Lord God : and not rather that he  
 should return from his way, and live ? But when the righteous turneth away from his  
 righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the  
 wicked man doeth, shall he live ? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be  
 25 remembered : in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them  
 shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel :  
 26 Is not my way equal ? are not your ways unequal ? When the righteous man turneth away  
 from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein ; in his iniquity that he  
 27 hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness  
 that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.  
 28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed,  
 29 he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel The way of the Lord is  
 30 not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal ? are not your ways unequal ? There-  
 fore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord  
 God. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be  
 31 your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed ; and  
 32 make you a new heart and a new spirit : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? For I have  
 no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves,  
 and live.

**Chap. 18.** The last verse of the preceding chapter declares that God is wont to abase the lofty and to exalt those of low estate. This gives occasion for a declaration of the principle upon which these providential dispensations proceed—viz., that every individual shall be equitably dealt with—a principle that precludes the children from either presuming on the fathers' merits or despairing on account of the fathers' guilt. A further link between the two chapters may be derived from the exem-

plification of this principle in the alternations of fortune and character in the later kings of Judah, from the time of Jotham downward. This chapter is an enlargement of Jer. 31 : 29. B. C.

This chapter refutes the implication of injustice in God, involved in the use of the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." The whole subject demands careful attention and candid, intelligent discriminations. For it should be

remembered that in the standard moral law embraced in the Ten Commandments the Lord appends to the penalties of the second commandment, forbidding idolatry, these words: "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate Me;" and further, that the prophets had declared that God would and did send the Jews into captivity for the sins of Manasseh—*e.g.*, 2 K. 24: 3, 4; 23: 26, 27; 21: 11-16. But these judgments fell not on Manasseh himself, but on his sons of the third and fourth generation—Josiah being in the second; his sons Jehoiakim and Zedekiah in the third, and Jehoiachin in the fourth. It need not surprise us therefore that this proverb should come to the lips of men who sought to justify themselves in their sins, and who were gratified to have even the least apology for arraigning the justice of God and for persisting in their sins, refusing to repent. The chapter will show us how the Lord meets this implication and how He enforces upon the people their personal duty. II. C.

The chief intention of this chapter is to show that God's dealings with mankind would be regulated by the good or ill behavior of each individual, it being the invariable rule of His providence that punishment should follow guilt, and happiness be the reward of innocence. There was, it seems, a proverb or common saying among the Jews which implied a censure upon the justice of God, as if the calamities which befell the present generation were inflicted on them merely for the sins of their forefathers. God is pleased therefore to declare here that however children may be involved, in respect to this world, in the consequences of their parents' guilt, impartial justice would ever be the rule of his conduct: temporal death was the declared punishment of sin to every man; and without repentance eternal death would follow. *Tracell.*

The exiles made bitter complaint of the words of the second commandment, that God visits upon the children the sins of the fathers. They had repented, were idolaters no longer, and yet they had to suffer the consequences of the crimes of their forefathers. Now it is the law of God, in nature and in providence, that the children are affected for good and evil by the doings of their parents. Aptitudes gained by the parent are bestowed upon the child; sins and the diseases which result from them are constantly matters of inheritance; while the fortunes of the parent, his success or failure, his industry or his thrift and profligacy, can-

not but affect the temporal position of his offspring. But Ezekiel shows with bold hand that this entail is strictly limited, and does not affect the moral probation of the individual. Each one in life makes his own choice, and both in things temporal and things spiritual repentance may reverse the past. A pious son may spring from a profligate father, a prosperous son from one overtaken by misery. Nay, even in a man's own life, the future may be the reverse of what has gone before. A lapse into sin may destroy the bright promise of former years (18, 33). R. P. S.

In this chapter Ezekiel anticipates in a remarkable manner some of the leading precepts of the Gospel, and we are not simply to regard this as a message of instruction given according to God's pleasure, but to connect it closely with the time and circumstances under which it was delivered. 1. Taken in conjunction with what has gone before, it contributes to the general purpose and harmony of the whole book. The prophet having given a summary of the history of God's people, and shown how continued apostasy had brought and was bringing upon them national judgment (16); and having warned king and people of the delusive character of their hopes of escape, feels it needful to guard them against attributing their calamities simply to the sins of their forefathers, and against merging individual in national responsibility. 2. The situation of the people was such as to call for and suggest such instruction. The judgments, in the approach of which they had long refused to believe, were at last making themselves too manifest to be overlooked. But the people were ready to evade the lesson which they should have learnt, by having recourse to the heathen principle of a blind fatality of retribution, which offered no means of escape either to the nation or to individuals, and so prevented consciousness of guilt and of responsibility. They had indeed a certain apparent ground to rest upon in the second commandment, where God declares that *He will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children*; but it was only apparent. Here God enunciates that which He declared throughout the Law, and which had been illustrated in the whole history of the people, that national sins should be followed by national judgment. (See Jer. 16: 11, 12; 32: 18.) This did not in fact interfere with the principle that each individual should be answerable for his own conduct, and should be equitably dealt with, any more than the fact that in all times temporal consequences of the acts of a nation or of in-

dividuals extend beyond themselves and their own times. The state of exile was intended to develop this principle, and so the prophet of the Captivity was led to anticipate in a remarkable manner the sublimer morality of the Gospel.

In this chapter is set forth fully the doctrine of *individual responsibility*. Already the same truth had been partially displayed with special reference to teacher and taught (3: 18 foll.), in the deliverance of those upon whom the mark was set (9: 4), and in the scrutiny of those who came to inquire of the Lord (14: 3 foll.). But here the enunciation is more systematic and complete. The question is made to rest upon the fundamental proposition, *All souls are Mine*. Man is not simply to ascribe his existence to earthly parents, but to acknowledge as his Father Him who created man in His own image, and who gave and gives him the spirit of life. The relation of father to son is merged in the common relation of all (father and son alike) as sons to their heavenly Father.

The proposition is illustrated by special examples of *the just men*. And here the notion of justice or righteousness is enlarged from the letter to the spirit of the Law. The duties done and the sins avoided are those which are particularly noticed in the Law, and were the special duties and sins of his countrymen; but the Law is passing into the Gospel, and the duties upon which stress is laid are just those which our Lord in the vision of judgment requires of those who are to give an account to Him at the last day (Matt. 25: 35, 36). But the contrast of the wicked and the just leads up to a further development of evangelical doctrine—repentance and forgiveness of sins. This doctrine is based upon the love and mercifulness of God, not indeed forgotten in the Law, but more fully revealed in the Gospel. (Cf. John 3: 16; 1 Tim. 2: 4.) If he who has been once just turns to wickedness, his previous justice shall be of no avail. On the other hand, the sinner who turns from his sin shall be welcomed and forgiven. It is out of place to inquire whether the person described as *just*, who afterward turns to wicked ways, was only apparently and not really what he seemed. The case is put simply as it is seen in the outward action, the inner motives and principles must be left to the judgment of God. The case of the fall of one who was once righteous is put first because man is in general ready enough to recognize the worthlessness of former virtue, when one has departed from it, and God grounds upon this recognition of the law

of judgment the assurance of His law of mercy. The lessons of this chapter are repeated distinctly in 33: 1-20, where the application is made (1) to the nation generally, and then (2) to the individuals composing it, with the view of awakening them to repentance.

The corollary of this doctrine is the efficacy of repentance, and the call to it is in a form characteristic of Gospel teaching. *Make you a new heart and a new spirit.* (Cf. 11: 19; 36: 26.) B. C.

**1-3.** The original rendered, "What mean ye?" demands rather the reason than the meaning. The sense is, *Why* should ye thus implicate the justice of God? The Lord would set the case in a light so clear that they must see the injustice of the implication which it involved. It does not by any means appear that the Lord proposes to change His policy—*i. e.*, either His principles or His practice in His government, so that henceforth there should be no more occasion for using this proverb, while previously there may have been occasion. Its meaning as a proverb is simply, The fathers sin and the children suffer its penalty. H. C.

**3.** Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb; or, as it may be read, Ye shall not have the use of this parable. The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise (Jer. 31: 29). Here it is made the matter of a threatening; there it intimates that God will return to them in ways of mercy; here it intimates that God would proceed against them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying, that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case (Jer. 23: 34, 36). God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers. Or, God will so manifest both to themselves and others, that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with: "Your own consciences shall tell you, and all your neighbors shall confirm it, that you yourselves have eaten the same sour grapes that your fathers ate before you, or else your teeth had not been set on edge." H.

**4.** This is the first point of the Lord's reply. The affirmation, "*are Mine*," implies not only ownership, but parental care and responsibility, and especially the governmental responsibility of dealing with them according to justice and never in violation of justice. The sinning soul and he only shall die, for his own sins and not for another's. The words "die" and

"death" are used in the Scriptures in at least three diverse senses: 1. For the well-known dissolution of soul and body—natural death. 2. For a state of heart in which sin has absolute dominion and the soul is committed to sinning past all hope of recovery by its own exertions—a state often called spiritual death. 3. For the penalty of the Divine law for sin—an amount of suffering and evil thought of as indefinitely great, and called death because this word stands for the greatest earthly evil—the ultimate infliction possible for man to inflict on his fellow-man. The two former are not to be thought of in this connection. Only the third meets the conditions of the case. See the term used in the same sense by Jeremiah (31 : 30 ; Hos. 13 : 1). These principles, "all souls are Mine;" and "the sinning soul shall die," are immutable and eternal. They had not been adopted *since* the Jews had begun to use this proverb and in consequence of this use. II. C.

He asserts and maintains His own absolute and incontestable sovereignty; Behold, all souls are Mine (verse 4). God here claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another: First, Souls are His, He that is the Maker of all things is in a particular manner the Father of spirits, for His image is stamped on the souls of men; it was so in their creation, it is so in their renovation. He forms the spirit of man within him, and is therefore called the God of the spirits of all flesh, of embodied spirits. Secondly, all souls are His, all created by Him and for Him, and accountable to Him. As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son, is Mine. Our earthly parents are only the fathers of our flesh, our souls are not theirs, God challenges them. Now from hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter: 1. That God may certainly do what He pleases both with fathers and children, and none may say unto Him, What doest Thou? He that gave us our being does us no wrong if He takes it away again, much less when He only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it; it is as absurd to quarrel with Him as for the thing formed to say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? 2. That God as certainly bears a good will both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either. We are sure that God hates nothing that He has made, and therefore (speaking of the adult who are capable of acting for themselves) He has such a kindness for all souls, that none die but through their own default. All souls are His, and therefore He is not partial in His judgment of them. Let us

subscribe to His interest in us and dominion over us. He says, All souls are Mine; let us answer, "Lord, my soul is Thine, I devote it to Thee, to be employed for Thee, and made happy in Thee." It is with good reason that God says, "My son, give Me thy heart, for it is My own:" to which we must yield; "Father, take my heart, it is Thy own."

Though God might justify Himself by insisting upon His sovereignty, yet He waives that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment by which He will proceed as to particular persons; and it is this: First, the sinner that persists in sin shall certainly die, his iniquity shall be his ruin. The soul that sins, it shall die, shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favor of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie forever under His wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the soul; the body is but the instrument of unrighteousness, it is called the sin of the soul (Micah 6 : 7). And therefore the punishment of sin is the tribulation and anguish of the soul (Rom. 2 : 9). Secondly, the righteous man that perseveres in his righteousness shall certainly live. If a man be just, have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and, as an evidence of that, do judgment and justice (verse 5), he shall surely live, saith the Lord God (verse 9). II.

The analogies of nature, applied to the moral government of God, would crush all hope in the sinful soul. There, for millions of ages, these stern laws have reigned supreme. There is no deviation, no modification, no yielding to the refractory or disobedient. All is harmony, because all is obedience. Close forever, if you will, this strange book claiming to be God's revelation; blot out forever its lessons of God's creative power, God's superabounding providence, God's fatherhood and loving guardianship to man His erring offspring, and then unseal the leaves of that mighty volume which the finger of God has written in the stars of heaven, and in those flashing letters of living light we read only the dread sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." *O. M. Mitchell.*

A pure benevolence never exists except where there also exists a pure rectitude and a pure holiness; and when guilt receives its condign punishment, benevolence is silent, while holiness approves and rectitude rejoices. In the clear and indisputable sayings of Scripture we are told that the wages of sin is death; that the soul which sinneth shall die. And there we find that from the moment a man becomes a transgressor he is under condemnation,

He occupies a new relation toward God—a relation of ever augmenting remoteness—a remoteness which has no tendency to lessen itself, and which every new sin increases. In other words, Scripture to all intents teaches that sin is an infinite evil, meriting an enduring punishment, and that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come. *Hamilton.*

**5. Do that which is right.** In all the great acts of life we have to subordinate mere feeling to conviction, impulse to principle, lively sensibilities to a law of right, and, provided we have just feeling enough to begin a commanded work honestly, we are to make the beginning. Put yourself directly where God has told you you ought to be, and then you will be in a position where the touching and inspiring objects *which naturally rouse decent emotions* will exert their power. Instead of waiting to feel more before you act at all, bestir yourself to act as you are, and your indifferent heart will be like coals of dulled fire under a rising wind. *F. D. H.*

The Bible says little of feeling directly, and appeals to it for the most part indirectly. This is like the grandeur of its reticence on many ideas, which are simply assumed, as are all the capital facts of man's nature. All is based on the elementary ground that every man is capable of emotion. But with no attempt at the tragic or pathetic rendering of events, the Bible is of all books that one which most powerfully affects the feelings. And in this way it not only pays the strongest tribute to the power of human feeling, but it ennobles emotion by expecting much from it, and by showing how much God values it. But it never brings upon us that deadly malady of over emotion which is caused by many a book. All feeling awakened by the Bible prompts to action. The far larger proportion of human emotion, for lack of consequent action, is fruitless. Emotion is like the sap that runs through the vine. Unless the result of the flow be fruit, it would be as well that no flow of the sap took place. Certainly there would be less disappointment in the end. Much sap pours into barren shoots. Much emotion evaporates in the subjective feelings of pity, distress or indignation, where it should turn into the precious fruits of hearty helpfulness, real assistance and strenuous labor to change the conditions which cause the need of commiseration or indignation.

A man's resources for the purchase of life's opportunities are his character, his time, his energies, his powers of mind and heart. The

more he pays out these in opportunities for doing good and for growing wiser and better, the richer man he is. His wealth rises in a multiplying ratio. But if a man puts his energies into something which brings him only temporary pleasure, and no ultimate good; worse still, if he invests time and energy in what harms him, he is a moral spendthrift, and no matter what his natural gifts, he will exhaust himself at length, and turn out a bankrupt, a beggar at the last. If we buy the treasures of pure thought, high aims, a chaste imagination, helpful associations and habits, nothing can ever rob us of them. No panic or disaster can touch them, and we shall have treasures in heaven which corruption can never waste or change ever take away. *S. S. T.*

Money melts away, pleasure palls on the senses, the very world is in constant change. Our thoughts and feelings, our love and faith, are the only possessions which are permanently ours. These last forever, and only these. The soul which rests on the unchanging love of the Saviour is anchored in security amid the "wreck of matter and the crash of worlds." Truth, purity, righteousness, love, self-sacrifice—these are facts in the nature of God; they are "eternal in the heavens." But nothing else is eternal. *J. F. Stevenson.*

**5-9.** This is a description of a good man, drawn for those times, in view of the morals and immoralities of that age, and also of the precepts and prohibitions of the Mosaic law. Of this just man, thus described in detail, the Lord declares, "*he shall surely live*"—i.e., he shall not die in the sense of *death* as used in this chapter. He shall have the favor and blessing of God, and not His frown and curse. The point of the affirmation is that God deals with individual men on principles that never violate simple justice. *H. C.*

**9. He shall surely live.** By life is meant, in the Old Testament, all that happiness which is contained in the literal sense of the promises belonging to that covenant; and under these were comprehended the promises of a better life, wherein God will bestow upon His servants the peculiar marks of His favor. *W. Louth.*

The true way to live is to bring to each duty that comes to our hand our wisest thought and our best skill, doing what appears to us at the time to be the right thing to do, and then leaving it, never regretting nor fretting about results. God has promised to guide us, and if we are living in true relations to Him we may expect guidance moment by moment as we go on. *J. R. M.*

**10-13.** The case here supposed is that of an apostate and recreant son of this just and good father. He is wicked—all the more so for the light of a godly and just example which he perpetually sins against. Shall this man *live*? By no means. He shall not live because his father was so good a man. For this very reason is his guilt the greater, and therefore for this reason all the more shall he die. His blood shall be on his own head. This is justice, and thus God evinces Himself just. H. C.

Gradually the mind that is familiarized with the notion of injustice grows unscrupulous and faithless. That is the history of all the gigantic public oppressions that have sent up their cry till the cry has entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. The warnings of the Old Testament prophets, through the periods of national decline, are almost constantly directed to uneven balances—to oppression and exaction, to legalized wrong, to the making of the poor poorer, and the burdens of the weak harder to be borne. F. D. H.

**14-17.** Here this wicked son becomes a father, and has a son who sees, abhors and forsakes his father's sins. This case came directly to the main point of the proverb. The father has eaten sour grapes: shall the son's teeth be blunted thereby? Shall the upright son die for the sins of his wicked father? Nay, verily. His virtue is really the greater because of the unpropitious circumstances under which and despite of which it has been developed.

**18.** To make the application of this case to the proverb the more palpable, the prophet recurs again to the ungodly father, described fully verses 10-13. He, being a wicked man, must die in his iniquity. His own sins demand this terrible doom! His doom is in no sense mitigated by his having a godly son. Ahaz and Amon were none the more favored of God for having such sons as Hezekiah and Josiah.

**19, 20.** The prophet here supposes the people to reaffirm their position, though somewhat modestly, and in the form only of a question. But after all you have said, *is it not true that sons bear the iniquity of their fathers?* The Lord answers: When the son, even of a wicked father, does right, he shall live. The soul that sinneth (and he *only*) shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall determine his destiny: the wickedness of the wicked shall decide his doom.

**21, 22.** The people doubtless made use of this proverb and of its unjust implication of

wrong on God's part, to *relieve their conscience from the pressure of obligation to repent*. Hence the tone of these and the following verses bears directly to the point of counteracting this influence and of persuading them to repent. Though you have sinned, yet if you will turn from all your sin and do only right, you shall live and not die. All your transgressions shall be forgiven and not be mentioned any more against you. Because of the new moral course unto which ye turn, ye shall live. It was vital to the best moral results that the people should see that repentance brings salvation, even to the chief of sinners.

**23.** Is it any pleasure to Me that the wicked man should die? Is it not rather My supreme pleasure that he should turn from his wicked ways and so should live? The people may have thought otherwise. It may have seemed to them that God took delight in visiting the penalties of an awful death on the wicked. If they had thought so, they did not know the heart of God; they had entirely misapprehended His nature; they had never seen and appreciated His deep, eternal love! For the most glorious, most blessed truth ever revealed of God to this sinning world is here—that God has compassion toward even very guilty sinners; is pained and not pleased when He must punish; is delighted, even to infinite joy, when the sinner turns from his ways and lives. H. C.

He is almighty to pardon; but He will not use it for thee, an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee: Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow-attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need; but art thou so bold with God as to expect His saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? That almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution. God Himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God swore in His wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter into His rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. *Gurnall*.

**24.** Still another phase of the general question requires notice. Suppose a man has lived righteously a long time and has accumulated what might be accounted a stock of righteousness. If then he turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, shall he live? By no means. All his stock of accumulated righteousness

ness goes for nothing—"shall not be mentioned;" in his sins he must die. So men must abandon all hope of God's favor on the ground of having once done right—if they turn from that righteousness and commit iniquity. H. C.

The threatenings imply there is a possibility of the saints falling away considered in themselves; but not that they are ever totally deserted by the Holy Spirit and left under the reigning power of sin. The threatenings are intended to awaken their care, are preservatives of them from ruin, and have a singular influence on their perseverance. A vigilant and cautious fear establishes the certainty of their hope. Indeed from the relics of weakness and corruption in the saints they sometimes actually fall into presumptuous sins, and by rebellious relapses wound conscience, and let out much of the vital spirits, their graces and comforts. But though the Divine nature is miserably wasted by such sins, yet it is not abolished. The new creature may decline in beauty and strength, yet life remain. Between a lively and dead faith there may be a fainting faith; as in Peter, for certainly our Saviour was heard in His prayer for him that his "faith should not fail" in his dreadful temptation. The saints do not by a particular fall extinguish the first living principles of obedience, faith and love; nor change their last end by an entire turning from God to the world. In short, a single act of wickedness does not reduce them into a state of unregeneracy; for it is not the matter of the sin singly considered, but the disposition of the sinner that denominates him. If grace in the saints should utterly perish, as some boldly assert, their recovery would be impossible; for the apostle tells us, that "if those who are enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift," that had been under some common workings and lower operations of the spirit, if such *fall away universally*, and live in a course of sin opposite to their former illuminations and resolutions, it is impossible to renew them by repentance; how much more then if those who were truly sanctified by the Holy Spirit should entirely lose all those gracious habits planted in them in their regeneration? But David, though guilty of adultery and murder, sins of so foul a nature as would dishonor paganism itself and "made the enemies of God to blaspheme," was restored by repentance. The Gospel propounds a remedy not only for sins committed before conversion, but after it. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." God does not revoke the adoption nor

reverse the justification of a believer, but upon scandalous disorders the effects of justification are suspended with respect to the new contracted guilt until there be sincere and actual repentance. He is not disinherited, but his right to the kingdom of heaven is eclipsed as to the comfortable sense of it, may be suspended till by renovation he is qualified and made fit for the enjoyment of that pure inheritance. *Bates.*

**25-28.** Here the implication, tacitly involved in the proverb, is brought out palpably—a charge of injustice in God. They say the course of God's moral administration is not equitable. It violates justice. This is the charge of the people against God. To this the Lord replies, squarely asserting the perfect justice of His own ways, and the injustice of theirs. It is *your* ways that are unequal: Mine are always equal. The points of argument made here are these two: 1. That a righteous man, turning from his righteousness and doing wrong, shall die for his iniquity. 2. That a wicked man, considering his ways and turning from his wickedness, shall surely live and not die. These great features of God's moral administration over a sinning world are so obviously equitable; they so plainly cover the whole ground of justice and of mercy, and so commend themselves to every man's conscience and moral sense as intrinsically right and good, that they are naturally the end of all argument. More is superfluous.

**29-32.** His perfect justice is reaffirmed in the same terms as before (verse 25); declares that He will judge them every one according to his ways; and exhorts them therefore to repent and turn from all their transgressions; else iniquity must be their ruin. So doing, it shall not be. "Casting away all transgression," is here essentially equivalent to "making to themselves a new heart and a new spirit." The putting away of sin supposes sin to be abhorred, supposes that the heart turns to God to obey and to love Him supremely. This and nothing less than this God implies in this exhortation; this and nothing less God demands of every sinner, and demands it with infinite reason. This reasonable duty God presses here as the only alternative to the doom of death. Do this—for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Do this—*else you must die*, past all mercy, past all possibility of salvation. And *why should you choose death?* Why doom yourselves to so dire an end when life is before you, and when God so earnestly longs to see you turning from your sins to accept and insure it forevermore!

In the second command the recital of the penalty has these words: "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me" (Ex. 20 : 5). This special statement was precisely fulfilled in the fact that the sins of Manasseh are repeatedly represented to be those which the Lord "could not pardon" and must punish; while yet the punishment in the form of dethronement, captivity and a violent death fell upon his children of the third and fourth generation. Now it was probably in view of these facts that the people brought into current use this proverb—cited also by Jeremiah (chap. 31 : 29, 30) and rebutted there in the same way as here. *How* does the Lord reply and rebut this allegation? Not by any attempt, even the least, to explain the philosophy of the penalty attached to the second commandment; not by showing *why* He governs nations with much long-suffering and waits through many generations of individual men, far down in the nation's life, still pressing His agencies for reform and laboring to save the whole people from the ruin toward which they are tending. Not thus does He condescend to debate this matter, although He *might* have done so—but He makes His response directly and squarely *practical*, to the heart and conscience of the people. He says to them virtually, There is no need just now that ye concern yourselves with the policy of God in His government of nations *as such*. Suffice it for you that ye personally stand or fall before God on your individual life. With every individual man, whether king or subject, I deal in perfect equity, never punishing any one sinner for the guilt of another sinner; never the son for the sins of his father. Do right and you live; but persist in sinning, turn from righteousness to sin, and you surely die. I have no pleasure in your death; I long to see you repenting and living righteously with a new heart and a new spirit. So shall my heart be cheered and gladdened in your eternal peace and life. This was the vital thing that needed to be said. This was all that the case really demanded. This rebutted the allegation of injustice on God's part, and brought the greatest possible pressure upon the heart and conscience toward repentance and salvation. Let us recur to the fact that the sins of Manasseh were made prominent as involving the nation in guilt which the Lord could not pardon; also, that in the event the national ruin fell on his children of the third and fourth generation; and that this fact may have had some influence to bring into

vogue the proverb which leads the discussion in this chapter. Here then note that this discussion brings out the very principle on which the Lord spared Manasseh. *He repented; broke off his sins by righteousness; and found mercy.* The case was one of exceedingly great and rich moral power as an encouragement to the vilest of sinners to return to the Lord their God. Was it not, at least mainly, for the sake of affording scope for the influence of this example that the Lord delayed the infliction of His judgments upon the nation, and yet prolonged their space for repentance! In this point the Lord has the same policy with nations as with individuals, suddenly arresting His judgments at the very moment when they are ready to smite the guilty, if any new circumstances inspire fresh hope or develop some yet untried influence which may possibly lead to repentance. Manasseh's long-continued wickedness had depraved and almost sunk the nation; his late repentance cast a gleam of hope athwart the darkness; and God therefore not only spared him, but postponed His annihilating judgments for the sake of one other earnest effort to reclaim and save a guilty people. II. C.

**30-32.** We have here the conclusion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason the verdict is brought in on God's side, it appears that His ways are equal; judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation; but behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and Divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge every one according to his ways, yet He waits to be gracious, and closes all with a call to repentance and a promise of pardon upon repentance. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to; all amounting to the same. We must repent; we must change our mind and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can toward the undoing of it again. We must turn ourselves from all our transgressions (verse 30) and again (verse 32), Turn yourselves, face about; turn from sin, nay, turn against it as the enemy you loathe, turn to God as the Friend you love. We must cast away from us all our transgressions, we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again; give sin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it overboard, as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raised the storm; cast it out of the soul, and crucify it as a malefactor. We



must make us a new heart and a new spirit. This was the matter of a promise (chap. 11 : 19), here it is the matter of a precept ; we must do our endeavor, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us His grace. St. Austin well explains this precept ; God does not enjoin impossibilities, but by His commands admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for what is not.

Here are four good arguments used to enforce these calls to repentance. It is the only way, and it is a sure way, to prevent the ruin which our sins have a direct tendency to. So iniquity shall not be your ruin ; which implies that if we do not repent iniquity will be our ruin here and forever, but that if we do we are safe, we are snatched as brands out of the burning. If we repent not we certainly perish, and our blood will be upon our own heads. Why will ye die, O house of Israel ? What an absurd thing to choose death and damnation rather than life and salvation. The reason why sinners die is because they will die, they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered ; herein sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, are most unreasonable and act most unaccountably. The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but desires our welfare ; I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies (verse 32), which implies that He has pleasure in the recovery of those that repent ; which is both an engagement and an encouragement to us to repent. We are made forever, if we repent ; Turn yourselves, and live ye. He that says to us, Repent, thereby says to us, Live, yea, He says to us, Live ; so that life and death are here set before us. II.

30. The limitations of God's pardoning love are regulated by the contrition and faith of its recipients. Repentance and forgiveness always go hand in hand throughout the Bible and human experience. The least sin unconfessed and unforsaken shuts a man out from hope. The greatest sin, if sincerely and honestly mourned over and acknowledged, is no barrier to a full forgiveness. E. M.

It is not unworthiness, but unwillingness that bars any man from God. Thousands have missed of Him by their unwillingness, but He never put off one soul on account of its unworthiness. *Flavel*.

Responsibility and sovereign grace receive equal and balanced emphasis in the Scriptures. No theory of responsibility is biblical which makes man competent to save himself. No theory of grace is biblical which makes man

passive in regeneration, supernaturally acted upon without his knowledge and election, irrespective of the moral temper of his personal life. The bondage of the will is not its paralysis or extinction. There may be only a despairing cry, like that which escaped from Paul when he pictured the man in whom the Divine law had made its living authority felt ; but there is life in a cry. Neither responsibility nor grace may be reduced to a thing of mechanics. The Bible does not do that. It affirms both with equal boldness, with an utter absence of conscious contradiction ; and, in its ever-blending homage to the behests of moral law and the confession of moral weakness, in its language of mingled self condemnation and appeal for mercy, the soul of man but repents and confirms the speech of inspiration. *Behrends*.

31. God promises (chap. 36 : 26) to " give them a new heart," and to " put within them a new spirit ;" here He exhorts them to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit. Which difference of expression is thus to be reconciled, that although God works in us to will and to do, and is the first mover in our reformation, yet we must work together with His grace, at least willingly receive it, and not quench or resist its motions. *W. Lorch*.

It must never be forgotten, the *repentance of the sinner is the demand of God*. Even the Almighty can only bestow life on the condemned sinner on condition of repentance ; yea, the being who obstinately has pleasure in his own death must finally receive that which, in opposition to God's pleasure, he has chosen as his portion. Repentance, how should it be possible, if the glad tidings of the merciful forgiveness of sins were not first brought and given ? But, on the other hand, how should we be able to boast of the unparalleled love to sinners of a compassionate God, and yet, unrepentant in heart, persevere in the old sinful course ? *Van O.*

**Why will ye die ?** Every word is emphatic. *Why*—show God or man one *reason*. *Will*—obstinacy alone—a determination not to be saved, or a *voluntary* listlessness about salvation—can prevent you. *Ye*—children of so many mercies, fed and supported by a kind God all your life ; *ye*, who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ ; *ye*, who have made many promises to give up yourselves to God ; *ye*, who have been dedicated to the ever blessed Trinity, and promised to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of

the flesh. *Why will ye die? Die!* what is this? A separation from God and the glory of His power forever! *Die*—forfeiting all the purposes for which your immortal souls were made, *Die*—to know what the *worm* is that *never dieth*; and what that *fire* is that is *never quenched*! Why, then, will ye die? A. C.

The clearest, the most dreadful declarations of the eternity of the unbeliever's ruin are those uttered by Jesus. Men sometimes babble of a difference, even a contrast, between the theology of Paul and of his Master. They talk of Paul as the austere logician, excoGITating a rigid system of dogmas; they prefer, they say, to turn to the teachings of the "meek and lowly Jesus," whose theology is that of love. Well, one thing do we know: never was there love like unto His love! It surpassed the love of woman. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He laid down His for enemies! No man can see one trait of cruelty in this Jesus; for His life was a ministration of kindness, not to the deserving, but to the "publican and sinner." Never did the cry of human woe strike His ear in vain; never did human anguish appeal in vain to His soul while on earth. And He knew, also, the real facts; for He came from the world of spirits and thither He went back. How comes it, then, that this meek and loving Jesus uttered His warnings against hell, in words sevenfold more frequent and solemn than the "austere" Paul? Is this also done in love? Yes; the beauty of His beneficent life and death permits us to think nothing else. If, then, it is the tenderest heart in the universe which comes out to us most fearfully, "Beware of the pit!" what shall we think? Is it because He who knows best, and loves us best, is most fully informed of its inevitable certainty and its intolerable pains? Hear this Divine pity, then (Mark 9: 43, 44; Matt. 18: 34; 13: 41, 42; 25: 30-46; Luke 16: 23-26; Rev. 6: 16, 17). *Dabney.*

When the portals of this world have been passed, when time and sense have been left behind, and this "body of death" has dropped away from the liberated soul, everything which clouded the perceptions, which dulled the vision, which drugged the conscience while on earth, will be cleared off like a morning mist. *We shall see all things as they really are*—ourselves and our sins among the number. We shall judge ourselves as God has always judged us. Our missed or lost opportunities; our forfeited birthright; our glorious possibility—ineffable in its glory; our awful actuality—in-

effable in its awfulness; the nature which God gave us—the nature we have made ourselves; the destiny for which He designed us—the destiny to which we have doomed ourselves; all these things will grow and fasten on our thoughts, till the contemplation must terminate in madness, were not madness a mercy belonging to the world of flesh alone. But there is yet another retributive pang in wait for the sinful soul, which belongs to the very nature of the future world—namely, the severance from all those we love, who on earth have trod the narrower and better path. The affections do not belong to the virtuous alone; they cling to the sinner through all the storms and labyrinths of sin; they are the last fragments of what is good in him that he silences or lays aside or tramples out; they belong not to the flesh, but to the spirit; and a spiritual existence, even if a suffering one, will but give them fresh energy and tenacity, by terminating all that has been antagonistic to them here below. Then will begin a *retribution* indeed, the appropriate anguish, the desolate abandonment of which who can paint, and who will be able to bear! To see those eyes, never turned on us before save in gentleness and trust, now giving us one last glance of Divine sadness and ineffable farewell; to watch those forms, whose companionship cheered and illuminated all the dark places of our earthly pilgrimage, and once and again had almost redeemed us from the bondage and the mire of sin, receding, vanishing, melting in the bright distance, to join a circle *where they will need us not*, to tread a path to which ours bears no parallel and can make no approach; and *then* to turn inward and downward, and realize our lot, and feel our desolation, and reflect that we have earned it—what has poetry or theology pictured that can compete with a Gehenna such as this! *Greg.*

Let the fairest star be selected, like a beautiful island in the vast and shoreless sea of the azure heaven, as the future home of the criminals from the earth; and let them possess in this material paradise whatever they most love, and all that is *possible* for God to bestow; let them be endowed with undying bodies, and with minds which shall forever retain their intellectual powers; let them no more be "plagued with religion;" let no Saviour ever intrude His claims upon them, no Holy Spirit disturb them, no God reveal Himself supernaturally to them; let no Sabbath ever dawn upon them, no saint ever live among them, no prayer ever be heard within their borders; but

let human beings exist there forever, smitten only by the leprosy of hatred to God, and with utter selfishness as the all-prevailing and eternal purpose ; then, as sure as the law of righteousness exists, on which rests the throne of God and the government of the universe, a society so constituted must work out for itself a hell of solitary and bitter suffering, to which no limit can be assigned except the capacity of a finite nature. *Norman McLeod.*

**32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.** The Holy Scriptures in general expressly declare that the good and gracious God was from the beginning and is still using the best, fittest, and wisest means to render all His creatures, one as well as another, blessed and happy ; and if any of them through their own self-willed obstinacy and perverseness miss of these joys, it will be greatly contrary to His inclination and desire. Thus when Adam was in paradise, the good God kindly cautioned him against the danger of disobedience. And when man by transgression fell He immediately comforted him, by telling him of the remedy He had prepared for his reconciliation and recovery, even the Seed of the woman which was to bruise the serpent's head ; that Seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed ; and who in the fulness of time was to " give His life a ransom for many," to " taste death for every man." And in consequence of this first promise, how gracious, yea, how compassionate, is the tenor of every declaration, which He made from time to time on this head. " Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die ? saith the Lord God : and not that he should return from his ways, and live ? Make you a new heart and a new spirit : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" Why will ye die, O sons of Adam ? seeing that God would have all men to be saved, and is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. *Dean Tucker.*

God could cause all transgressors to perish in and on account of their iniquities, without any one having a right to complain of injustice. And yet He has no pleasure in that which

He has essentially a right to do ; He makes no use of that right ; He would much rather mourn it, if the ungodly must needs perish. Assuredly, we must not understand that which the Scripture reveals to us of Divine sorrow and repentance in a manner unworthy of God ; no human representation may be taken but in a Divine sense. The Infinite One is indeed infinitely exalted above human motives and affections ; but as little should we represent the Merciful One as seated on the throne of the universe in, immoveable, unchanging repose, which would not be disturbed although a whole guilty world sank down into perdition. Nay, a lost sinner is a pearl the less in the glorious crown of Christ ; another victim for the insatiable powers of darkness : how should all this not concern the Father, from whom the whole race in heaven and earth are named ? *Van O.*

The great lesson to be learned from this chapter is the necessity of a good life in order to the attainment of everlasting happiness. Sincere piety toward God, kindness and charity to our neighbor, temperance, soberness and chastity in the government of ourselves, these are the qualifications required by God. The indred corruption of mankind and the infirmity of our nature are lamentable hindrances to our strict performance of these duties ; " the corruptible body presseth down the soul," so that " in many things we offend all." But God has mercifully provided a remedy for our weakness, and even for our grievous sins. Hearty repentance and amendment of life were the conditions required from the Jews for regaining the Divine favor. From us also are they strictly required ; but thanks be to God, we have a " Mediator of a better covenant," through whose blood we have remission of our sins ; and by persevering in a righteous course we shall not fail to find acceptance with God. Let us, then, put our trust in God through the merits of this merciful Redeemer, let His law be the constant rule of our lives, and whenever we err from it, let us immediately repent and turn unto the Lord our God, " so iniquity shall not be our ruin." *Travell.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XIX.

**19 : 1, 2** MOREOVER, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, and say, What was thy mother? A lioness: she couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she 3 nourished her whelps. And she brought up one of her whelps; he became a young lion: 4 and he learned to catch the prey, he devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was 5 taken in their pit: and they brought him with hooks unto the land of Egypt. Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and 6 made him a young lion. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young 7 lion: and he learned to catch the prey, he devoured men. And he knew their palaces, and laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, because of the 8 noise of his roaring. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces: 9 and they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit. And they put him in a cage with hooks, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into strong holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

10 Thy mother was like a vine, in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full 11 of branches by reason of many waters. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and their stature was exalted among the thick boughs, and they were seen in their 12 height with the multitude of their branches. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken off 13 and withered; the fire consumed them. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry 14 and thirsty land. And fire is gone out of the rods of her branches, it hath devoured her fruit, so that there is in her no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

**Chap. 19.** The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the 17th, to foretell and lament the ruin of the house of David, the royal family of Judah, in the calamitous exit of the four sons and grandsons of Josiah—Jehohaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament (verse 1). And he does it by similitudes. The kingdom of Judah and house of David are here compared to a lioness, and those princes to lions that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down and taken in nets (verses 2-9). That kingdom and that house are here compared to a vine, and these princes to branches, which had been strong and flourishing, but were now broken off and burned (verses 10-14). This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themselves with vain hopes of the lengthening out of their tranquillity. II.

This chapter sets before the exiles the fall of the royal house of Judah and ultimately of the nation. With high poetic beauty this is done by conceiving of the whole people as "thy mother;" of this mother as first a lioness who puts her young lions one after another on the throne: and next, as a vine whose strong shoots become sceptres for her kings, but which

is finally itself plucked up in fury, dried by the east wind, and burned in the fire. So perish the kings of Judah, the people also, and the whole frame of organized society and government—a cluster of painful facts taken up here for a lamentation among the exiles of Chaldaea. Some of these events had already transpired: the rest of them were near at hand. There was no hope of saving these exiles morally and spiritually without bringing to bear upon them the entire moral power of those judgments with which God was scourging and wasting their mother people and country. Hence these topics appear in Ezekiel "line upon line," reiterated with wonderful variety of representation, and we might say, in forms which exhaust the entire wealth of symbols and figures known to Hebrew or Chaldaean literature. H. C.

A dirge or lamentation for Jehohaz and Jehoiachin. We have seen in chap. 17 that Ezekiel regarded Zedekiah as an interloper. It is in accordance with this view that here he passes over Jehoiakim and Zedekiah as mere creatures of Egypt and of Babylon, and recognizes Jehohaz and Jehoiachin as the only legitimate sovereigns since the time of Josiah. But this dirge in referring to the past looks forward to the future, and warns the usurper Zedekiah of an approaching fate similar to that of the two earlier kings. B. C.

**3, 4.** This first young lion-king was Jehoahaz, recognized by three marks. He was the first among the sons of Josiah to succeed him on his throne, and is the first in order here. He was put on the throne *by the people*, as the history specially affirms (2 K. 23:30; 2 Chron. 36:1). He and he only, having been deposed by Pharaoh Necho, was carried (as here stated) to Egypt, and died there. The figure is carried out to the life. This young lion caught the ways of lion-kings; he "learned to catch the prey and devoured men."

**5-9.** This second young lion is not Jehoia-kin, the immediate successor of Jehoahaz, but is Jehoiachin, his son. For the former (the father) was put on the throne, not by the people, but by the king of Babylon; and he seems not to have been carried to Babylon, but to have died in disgrace at Jerusalem. (See Jer. 22:18, 19; 36:30.) On the other hand, Jehoiachin was in favor with the people, and for aught that appears was put on the throne by them; was taken captive to Babylon and remained there in captivity at least thirty-seven years; and finally his fall was specially afflictive to the exiles. They had many fond hopes of his restoration. (See Lam. 4:20.) The people hoped that Jehoahaz might be restored to them, till this hope perished (verse 5). H. C.

**5.** *She took another.* Jehoiachin, who was not appointed by a foreign prince out of order, like his father Jehoia-kin, but succeeded regularly with the consent of the people (2 K. 24:6). The *waiting* of the people was during the absence of their rightful lord Jehoahaz, a captive in Egypt while Jehoia-kin, whom they deemed an usurper, was on the throne. It was not till Jehoiachin succeeded that they seemed to themselves to have a monarch of their own.

**6.** Jehoiachin soon showed himself no less unworthy than Jehoahaz; he should have been a royal lion reposing in majesty and strength;

he became a ravening beast of prey (2 K. 24:9).

**8.** *Then the nations set against him.* The *nations* are here the Chaldeans; Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument in God's hands for punishing the wickedness of Jehoiachin, who in Ezekiel's time still lived a captive in Babylon (2 K. 24:10 foll.).

**10.** The metaphor is changed. The excellency of a vine is in her fruitful branches; the glory of a mother in her noble children. For the sense in which Jeremiah is to write Jehoiachin childless, see on Jer. 22:30. Ezekiel here takes a general view of the king and princes of the blood royal. B. C.

**10-11.** By a sudden change of figure the Jewish people become a *vine*—a figure of somewhat frequent occurrence in the Scriptures and recently used by Ezekiel himself. (See chap. 15:6; 17:6. See also Isa. 5:1-7; 27:2-7; Ps. 80:8-16; Jer. 2:21.) Her strong shoots are sceptres for kings, and virtually in the figure represent kings themselves. She rose to prominence among the nations, but she was suddenly plucked up by the fury of the Almighty. The east wind, terribly withering in that climate, dried up her roots; her strong rods (sceptres) were broken, and the fires of Divine judgments consumed both kings and people. A few of her people had been taken into captivity—a fact represented here by her being transplanted to a wilderness and set in a dry and thirsty ground. Her last king, Zedekiah, by his treachery to the king of Babylon, had brought down the final stroke of vengeance—corresponding to a fire going out from one of the rods (sceptres) of her foliage, which devoured her fruit, so that she had no successor for her throne. The royal house is utterly broken down. The throne of Judah is in ruins. To the Hebrew exiles this was and should still be "for a lamentation." H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XX. 1-44.

**20:1** AND it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, the tenth *day* of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me.  
**2, 3** And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers; and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine

hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of  
6 Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the LORD your God ; in that day  
I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt into a land  
that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands :  
7 and I said unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not  
8 yourselves with the idols of Egypt : I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against  
me, and would not hearken unto me ; they did not every man cast away the abominations of  
their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt : then I said I would pour out my  
fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.  
9 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations,  
among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them  
10 forth out of the land of Egypt. So I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and  
11 brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my  
12 judgements, which if a man do, he shall live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sab-  
baths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that  
13 sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness : they walked  
not in my statutes, and they rejected my judgements, which if a man do, he shall live in  
them ; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned : then I said I would pour out my fury upon  
14 them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should  
15 not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I brought them out. Moreover  
also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the  
land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands ;  
16 because they rejected my judgements, and walked not in my statutes, and profaned my sab-  
baths : for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from de-  
18 stroying them, neither did I make a full end of them in the wilderness. And I said unto  
their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe  
19 their judgements, nor defile yourselves with their idols : I am the LORD your God ; walk in  
20 my statutes, and keep my judgements, and do them : and hallow my sabbaths ; and they  
21 shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. But  
the children rebelled against me ; they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judge-  
ments to do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them ; they profaned my sabbaths : then  
I said I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the  
22 wilderness. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it  
should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I brought them forth.  
23 Moreover I lifted up mine hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would scatter them  
24 among the nations, and disperse them through the countries ; because they had not executed  
my judgements, but had rejected my statutes, and had profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes  
25 were after their fathers' idols. Moreover also I gave them statutes that were not good, and  
26 judgements wherein they should not live ; and I polluted them in their own gifts, in that  
they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them  
desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD.  
27 Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the  
LORD God : In this moreover have your fathers blasphemed me, in that they have committed  
28 a trespass against me. For when I had brought them into the land, which I lifted up mine  
hand to give unto them, then they saw every high hill, and every thick tree, and they offered  
there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering, there also  
29 they made their sweet savour, and they poured out there their drink offerings. Then I said  
unto them, What meaneth the high place whereunto ye go ? So the name thereof is called  
30 *Bamah* unto this day. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God :  
Do ye pollute yourselves after the manner of your fathers ? and go ye a whoring after their  
31 abominations ? and when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the  
fire, do ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, unto this day ? and shall I be inquired of  
by you, O house of Israel ? As I live, saith the LORD God, I will not be inquired of by you :  
32 and that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all ; in that ye say, We will be as the  
33 nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. As I live, saith the LORD  
God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out,  
34 will I be king over you : and I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out

of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out : and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant ; and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me ; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel : and ye shall know that I am the Lord. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God : Go ye, serve every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me : but my holy name shall ye no more profane with your gifts, and with your idols. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them, serve me in the land : there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. As a sweet savour will I accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered ; and I will be sanctified in you in the sight of the nations. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country which I lifted up mine hand to give unto your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have polluted yourselves ; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 20.** Another visit from the chieftains of the people. Ezekiel in reply to their inquiries sets forth their national history, the national judgment and the hope of Divine mercy. This leads up to the prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah. B. C.

This chapter, with a new date, has its special occasion—the coming of certain elders of Israel to inquire of the Lord through the prophet. It has also its special strain of reply—essentially a *résumé* or historical review of the great trials which the Lord experienced with the Hebrew people on the point of their propensity to idolatry, showing that, over and over again, He had forbidden them to worship idols, had solemnly sworn that He would exterminate them with His judgments for this sin, but had spared them for His great mercy's sake. As a historical sketch the chapter corresponds somewhat closely with Neh. 9 ; Ps. 78, and the speech of Stephen in Acts 7. Here pre-eminently the historical facts cited bear on the great points now present and prominent—viz., that the people were strangely infatuated toward idolatry, that they had been on the verge of national ruin repeatedly for this sin ; and that they had been spared only through the great mercy of God and to save the honor of His throne before the heathen : and not at all for their own sake or merit.

**1.** This new date is about eleven months later than the last named (8 : 1). H. C.—*In the seventh year.* Of Jehoiachin's captivity. (Cf. chap. 1 : 2 ; 8 : 1.) All the prophecies re-

corded from the eighth chapter to this probably belong to the sixth year of the Captivity. H. C. *Louth.*

*The elders of Israel.* These were as in 14 : 1, from Ezekiel's fellow-exiles, designated in general terms by the name of Israel, though more properly belonging to the kingdom of Judah. The use of the word *Israel* is the more appropriate here, because in his reply the prophet refers to the history of the people from the very beginning. B. C.

**2, 3.** The doom of the guilty people and city was fixed, and no prayer could reverse it. God "would not pardon." (See 2 K. 24 : 4. Ezek. 14 ; Jer. 15 ; 7 : 16 ; 11 : 14 ; 14 : 11.) On the clause, "I will not be inquired of by you," Jerome has this fine comment : "To the holy and to those who ask for right things, the promise is given : 'While they are yet speaking, I will say, Here I am.' But to sinners, such as these elders of Israel were, and as those whose sins the prophet proceeds to describe, no answer is given, but only a fierce rebuke for their sins, to which He adds his oath : 'As I live,' to strengthen his solemn refusal." H. C.

**4.** *Wilt thou judge them?* We should rather say, Wilt thou not judge them?—*i.e.*, pronounce sentence upon them? (Cf. 22 : 2.) The repetition of the phrase is expressive of a strong desire that the act should be begun, and thus give the force of an imperative. B. C.

**5.** Instead of allowing himself to be inquired of in prayer to avert His threatened judgments against the Jews, the Lord directs the prophet

to set before these elders the long record of their national sins and provocations (verses 5-32). II. C.

**5-9.** The history of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Israel here begins as early as their beginning; so does the history of man's apostasy from his Maker. No sooner have we read the story of our first parent's creation, than we immediately meet with that of their rebellion; so we see here it was with Israel; a people designed to represent the body of mankind, both in their dealings with God and His with them. II.

The state of the children of Israel in Egypt. They were taken thither to be formed into a nation, and were warned to abstain from the idolatry of the heathen. This purpose they entirely lost sight of in Egypt, yet God spared them and brought them into another state of probation. B. C.—They would not hearken to the Lord: hence while they were in Egypt the Lord solemnly threatened to pour out His fury and to exhaust ("accomplish") his anger upon them. But He spared and saved His people then for His name's sake, that the heathen might not reproach Him as unable to save His own people. II. C.

**10-26.** The history of the struggle between the sins of Israel, by which they endeavored to ruin themselves, and the mercies of God, by which He endeavored to save them and make them happy, is here continued; and the instances of that struggle in these verses have reference to what passed between God and them in the wilderness, in which God honored Himself and they shamed themselves. The story of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament (I Cor. 10; Heb. 3) as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Christians. II.

**12.** A quotation from Ex. 31: 13. The Sabbath was a *sign* of a peculiar people, was commemorative of the work of creation, and hallowed to the honor of Jehovah, the covenant God. As man honored God by keeping the Sabbath holy, so by the Sabbath God sanctified Israel, marked them as a holy people. Therefore to profane the Sabbath was to abjure their Divine Governor.

**13.** *My Sabbaths they greatly polluted.* We have no record of the actual non-observance of the sabbatical rest in the wilderness except at the first giving of the manna (Ex. 16: 27); and in the case of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day (Num. 15: 32); but these were corrected on the spot, and the perpetual miracle of the cessation of the manna probably

secured the formal observance of the day. The *pollution* of the Sabbath then must have consisted in failing to make the day holy in deed as well as in name by earnest worship and true heart service. B. C.

**13-22.** The strain of this chapter is that the Lord's patience was repeatedly tried to the utmost, so that He was often on the point of exterminating the guilty people by His swift judgments; but restrained Himself through His great mercy, and to save His holy name from reproach before the heathen in whose sight He had brought them forth from Egypt and adopted them as His own peculiar people. This view of their national history was eminently forcible for Ezekiel's time and for the circumstances of both the exiles and their brethren then just on the brink of exterminating ruin in their native land. II. C.

**18.** The Book of Deuteronomy contains the address to the *children* of those who perished in the wilderness. The whole history of Israel was a repetition of this course. The covenant was made with one generation, broken by them, and then renewed to the next. B. C.—*But I said unto their children in the wilderness.* This refers to the many pathetic exhortations contained in the Book of Deuteronomy, particularly those in chaps. 29, 30, 31 and 32, which were uttered after that rebellious generation were all consumed, as God had threatened them (see Num. 14: 32, 33; 26: 64, 65), and were designed as warnings to succeeding generations (De. 31: 16-21). W. Loeth.

**20.** It admits of ample proof that the reasons given of God for enjoining the observance of the Sabbath—given specially in the fourth command itself, and in the passage Ex. 31: 13-17, which is specially under Ezekiel's eye in our text—are of *universal application*. The Great Father of the race wrought six days in the creation and rested the seventh. He puts His own example not before Israel only, but before the race, and invites, may more, *commands* them to follow it. He signifies to them that He *would be remembered* as their Creator and Father, and would have them set apart time for an object so vital. Then Ex. 31: 13-17 develops yet more fully the thought that in the Sabbath God aims to sanctify His people and to make it a visible sign of a special relationship between Himself and them. Yet here let it be carefully noted, it is His relation to them not as Hebrews, but as His children, His people. All these points are general, not special; good for the race, not restricted and of value to the Hebrews only. Indeed they show the Sabbath to



be a glorious *boom* which no tribe or nation or age can afford to forego. Thus far the discussion of this great question respecting the universal obligation of the Sabbath as a Divine institution comes fairly within the province of the expositor of Ezekiel because it is legitimately involved in the sense of his words. Other points bearing on the question are : its institution in Eden ; the traces of it in the seven-day periods during the deluge ; its existence among the Hebrews prior to its announcement from Sinai (see Ex. 16 : 22-30), and the proofs of its re-endorsement in the beginning of the Christian age. II. C.

Its very place in the Jewish Decalogue is by no means an obscure intimation that its authority is altogether superior to that of the merely Jewish ordinances. The ceremonial law was merely Jewish ; the details of legislation again, whereby the equitable principles of Jewish jurisprudence were carried into specific enactment, were merely Jewish. But all these are very broadly distinguished from that Decalogue in which the fourth commandment has a place. The ten "words" announce principles ; they are not of the nature of national statutes ; they do not prescribe penalties. And accordingly, as a body of Divine principles, as a summary of human morality, of duty toward God and man, they occupy a position of glory and supremacy amid the ordinances of Israel altogether unique. As Sinai, the holy mountain, was fenced off from the camp of the congregation by bounds which none might pass and live, so are the ten words of Jehovah fenced off from the enactments of the Mosaic law. These ten words, and these ten only, were spoken by the Most High Himself. These, and these only, were written by the finger of God on two tables of stone. These two tables were placed in the holy ark called "the Ark of the Covenant," which itself was placed within the second veil, in the midst of the Holy of Holies, and underneath the cherubim of glory, in the innermost heart of the most holy and most secret shrine of the Divine presence and glory. Surely all this bespeaks an essential distinction and superiority in the Decalogue as compared with the merely national and the necessarily temporary laws and observances of the Mosaic economy. . . . It is not easy to imagine a more apparently incredible paradox than that one commandment of a merely national scope and temporary obligation should have been associated, in a summary of moral duty, with nine others of perpetual obligation ; that it should have been placed in the very central niche of

all the commandments, as on one side directly touching the honor and worship of God, and on the other the rights and well-being of man ; that equally with all the other commandments it should have been spoken by the voice of the Most High and written by the Divine finger on one of the tables of stone ; and yet that this one "word" alone of all the ten should be merely ceremonial and temporary, the rest being all of a moral nature and of permanent obligation. Surely it must be felt as if no arguments could establish such a paradox as this. *Riggs* (See Vol. II., pp. 174-183.)

If the seventh-day rest formed part of the grand plan, not only of creation, but also of revelation and redemption—to which the whole after-development of that plan was made conformable, and therefore running through the entire Scriptures, as veins and arteries through the human body—it cannot be rooted out without marring the entire Scriptures and destroying the whole plan. If it has been formally blessed and hallowed of God, no matter when and where, and that blessing and hallowing nowhere recalled, then those Divine acts of blessing and hallowing forever establish its perpetuity. If founded in the example of God, that example being eternal, the appointment must be eternal likewise ; and that example being set at the beginning, in the presence of the world, is the common property and standard of the world, and therefore must be universal in its obligation. If this seventh-day rest be the only rest created for man, being alike the prophetic germ and foundation of the whole, all the other rests being but its development, and the rest of heaven its termination and completion, then this seventh-day rest must ever remain that it may stand as the prophecy, pledge, and perpetual witness of that coming rest, until its full and complete realization hereafter. If ordained at the beginning, and having an antecedent existence prior to the organization of the Jewish commonwealth, and afterward entering into the national constitution of that people as the principles of morality enter into the legislation of any Christian country, the subsequent overthrow of that commonwealth has no bearing upon the question of its existence, and having survived that wreck, there remains nothing else to endanger its perpetuity. If the Incarnate Son—by whom the Father created all things, and who ended His work on the seventh day by resting ; who was the rock that followed Israel through the wilderness ; who, in such glorious epiphany from the summit of the burning mount, authorita-

tively repeated and proclaimed that law; and who afterward so clearly asserted this as His high and sole prerogative, being "Lord of the Sabbath"—if He should proclaim the law repealed, then it would be repealed indeed! But instead of this, He at all times recognized its binding authority; He obeyed it Himself; He interpreted it, and died leaving it, with His interpretation annexed, as the expressed statute of His kingdom, as much so as He left the law of murder or adultery or profanity, with His interpretation annexed, as the law of that kingdom. Instead of repealing, He actually entered into argument with the Pharisees to show that His acts were all conformable thereto. And instead of removing, He positively asserted that He did not come to destroy, but to fulfil, or, in other words, to maintain. *Stacy.*

#### THE OLD AND THE NEW SABBATH.

How that former seventh day pales in the effulgence of the resurrection morning! Where, in all that is known of the history of man, where, in all that is known of God, is there an event at once so great in its own elements, so important as a manifestation of the Divine to man, so transcendent in its relation to man's happiness and hope! How could it be possible that Christ's redeemed should live in slavery to the day He spent in the tomb and neglect the day of His rising! Their joy, their hope, their heart, was in the first day, the Lord's day, which they and all the Church kept from the resurrection. The seventh day, whatever it represented, gradually faded and was forgotten. The day of the Lord's rising was the one day for the hopes of man. It and no other could possibly be the Lord's Day. . . . When the old land-bound Sabbath passed into the world-wide Lord's Day it girdled the earth with universal brotherhood in the Lord. In whatever strange land, of whatever strange tongue, the believer now joins in that day's worshipping assembly, the sense of brotherhood glows within him. Over all the world, from the western skirts of the Pacific around with the sun to its starting point, that day, dotting the whole globe with gatherings in the name of our Lord, busied alike in prayer and praise and promise in His name, makes a testimony to the unity and brotherhood of Christian faith which no man, without wilfulness, can gainsay.

Like the old, the new Sabbath is a day of rest. From the urgency of bread-winning and the often more coercive spur of ambition, it is a respite, a vacation. But it speaks, as Israel's could not, with a plain and positive utterance

of a better rest—a perpetual release from all urgency and spurring, and from every wearying or wearying infliction whatsoever; an epoch of holy, blessed and perfectly free activity; the rest—much more than rest, the unbroken ease, busy, loyal, joyous ease, that shall pervade the Messianic kingdom of the Lord. . . . By her sociality, pure and beneficent, springing spontaneously from the feeling of common relationship to her redeeming Lord; by her instruction, sound, comforting and stimulating, having as its premise that man lives by and through and for God, and edifying and building up the minds of believers through meditation on the whole Word of God; by her leisure, detached from merely earthly and personal affairs, busy with the activity of holy love, and inspired to private prayer and public worship, and every Christian word and work through love to the Lord, and to them who love the Lord, and to them for whom the Lord died—thus the Church, in a wider and happier sense than did Israel, does remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy—her own Sabbath, the holy festival of the Lord's day. The tongue of the Church is this day given to her Lord. She tells His story, she declares His purposes, she confesses her faith in Him, she expresses her loyalty. For all that the Church is, for all she may do and for all she may become, each member has his own responsibility and his own free spontaneity. Whatever he does counts as his heart moves him. So on this day he lays his heart against the millionfold heart of the Church to feel her vast, deep, triumphant life. He sees with the mental eye, as the framing and the background of all the instruction, comfort and encouragement which precept and promise and prophecy afford, a view of the thronged city of God, of the splendid capital and mansions of the redeemed, of the magnificent harmony and busy ease and consummate civilization of the Lord's kingdom. He breathes while lifted up the fragrance of many-voiced prayer that on this day enwraps the earth as a film of the resonant air of heaven; and in this bracing atmosphere his veins tingle with consciousness of unlimited desire and capacity and destiny—his own and the Church's own when the Lord shall come.

And so on the day that marks God's authority over human times, on the day our Lord has honored as His official day before His Church, on the day which the Holy Ghost has sealed as the epoch of the new covenant (the New Testament), on this day believers come together as a public body to give their public testimony of

loyalty, and that they may together commune with the Lord. While aglow before the mystery of His person, wherein the brotherhood of man blends with Divine Sonship, while absorbed in the wonder of His love, which, stronger than death, by the intensity of its sacrifice, transmutates the universal curse into a universal privilege, while transfigured with the beauty of His nature, reflected somewhat within each one and diffused over the spiritual aspect of the world-circling commemoration, a tender awe falls upon the assembly; the Lord is there. Then, like the early patriarchs, and like Israel at Pentecost, the feast of weeks, the Church partakes together of the sacrificial meal. Each one realizes that it is the Lord who died for him, a sinner; who redeemed, reconciled, saved him by giving His own body to be bruised for him, His own blood to be sprinkled on the soil for him. Each one perceives that the whole aggregate of like-minded souls who commune thus with their Lord are inseparably joined together by this communion in one body, and this body is the Lord's own body, living, growing, the organ of His spirit, the eternal and the holy temple of His own Divine humanity. And each one apprehends that the Lord of all is the man Jesus. He whose quivering body was torn, whose warm blood was shed, who rested in Joseph's tomb, and awoke in immortal humanity, and rose above man's observation or comprehension before the apostle's eyes, and dwells now in occupation that we can only most dimly conceive as we lift our uneducated eyes with loving awe and dependent reverence toward His majesty—Jesus, the very man, our brother; Jesus enthroned at the right hand of God—Himself incomprehensibly transfigured with the outshining of His own divinity, but Himself the Lamb slain through the ages; Himself the head over His own body, the Church; Himself the same Jesus who ascended from Olivet, who will come again in His own day (who knows how soon?) to put down all enmity, to establish all authority, to reign in righteousness over His Church, and with His Church over the universe! Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. We wait Thy day. *Greg.*

25. Equally remarkable and bold is the statement that the whole of the Mosaic law was not equally good. When first the Israelites came out of Egypt, God gave them "statutes and judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them." But when they rebelled, and despised God's judgments, and polluted His Sabbaths, which He had given as a special sign of His covenant with them, then He "gave

them statutes which were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live" (20: 11, 25). Such teaching is the more remarkable as coming from a priest, and one who was in general so strict himself in the observance of the Levitical precepts. (See 4: 14.) Paul himself did not more plainly teach that much of the law was a burden too heavy for men to bear. R. P. S.

In what sense did God give the people these statutes? Only in the sense of suffering their wicked kings to enjoin them. Not unfrequently God is said in the Scriptures to do what He only permits to be done. He was said to harden Pharaoh's heart, when, in fact, according to the record, He only suffered him to harden his own heart, and when the most direct agency which He exerted toward that result was *in removing the plagues* under which that proud king quailed and relented. For *what purpose* in this case did the Lord give the people "statutes not good and judgments whereby they should not live?" The passage itself supplies the answer. Because they did not execute His judgments, but despised His statutes, polluted His Sabbaths and set their eyes on their father's idols, therefore God suffered them to be ensnared into deeper idolatry by the royal influence of Jeroboam, Ahab, Omri and Manasseh. It was a Divine judgment upon them for their persistent love of idols. The Lord gave them their way to let them see and to let all the world in coming ages see what idolatry is; what it leads to; how fearfully it curses a people of itself, and how terribly God will punish it. On the same principle God gave up the heathen nations to idolatry and to deep moral corruption. So Paul affirms (Rom. 1: 21, 24, 26, 28; 2 Thess. 2: 11). H. C.

Civil laws, whatever be their source, to be adapted to the wants of any given community, must arise out of circumstances, and be relative to certain specific ends; which ends, under other circumstances, it might be the height of folly to pursue. When Solon was asked whether he had prepared the best laws of which he was capable for the Athenians, he replied: "I have prepared the best that they were able to receive." Of much the same nature is that declaration of Divine wisdom to the Jews, which has so perplexed biblical inquirers: "I gave them also statutes that were not good"—that is, laws not absolutely the best, though they were relatively so. Montesquieu, with that penetration which belongs to all his philosophical reflections, has observed that the passage cited above is the sponge that wipes

out all the difficulties which are to be found in the law of Moses. This view of the meaning and force of the passage is confirmed by the words of our Saviour. He has told us that Moses tolerated divorce among the Jews because of the hardness of their hearts. It is reasonable to conclude that he permitted the continuance of other social evils on the same principle. It is implied in our Lord's declaration that if the Jews of Moses' time had been less hard-hearted or prejudiced, less wedded to old notions and usages, several of His statutes would have been different from what they were. Is it not also involved that the excellence which Moses claims, and most justly, as belonging to his laws is, as it respects some of them at least, a relative rather than an absolute excellence?

The principle that laws must be relative to circumstances, that they must grow out of the state of society and be adapted to its wants, is founded in reason and confirmed by experience. It is, therefore, a just and solid principle, and must commend itself as such to every enlightened judgment. But it involves this clear and certain inference that God never intended the Mosiac laws to bind any nation but the Hebrews; and that it would be quite foolish to detach particular parts from the rest, and to attempt the ingrafting of them on other systems, to which they must prove incongruous. The fundamental principle of the Hebrew polity—the suppression of idolatry and the maintenance of the worship of the one true God—so diverse from that of every other government ever known among men, could not but enter essentially into the frame of the laws. Besides this, the circumstances of climate, soil, situation, political relations, character and power of the neighboring nations, customs, mode of life, prevalent notions as to honor and disgrace, and the nature and severity of punishments, species and sources of crime, kinds of disease, etc., would modify a Divine quite as much as they would a human legislation; and still more, perhaps, in proportion to its superior wisdom. If God were now by special revelation to enact a code of civil laws for every nation on the globe, it is not likely that any two of them would agree in every particular. It is certain, for example, that in such a code framed for the United States, there would be wanting the old Hebrew laws respecting divorce, polygamy, blood-avengement, usury, the double portion of the first born son, the exclusion of daughters from the inheritance, the marriage of a deceased brother's childless widow, and the sump-

tuary laws in general; for none of the reasons on which these laws were based has any existence among us; and to separate a law from its principle is like sundering the body from the head or heart. E. C. W.

**29. Bamah.** The Hebrew word for *high place*. Another instance of the perversion of God's laws. When the Israelites first entered Canaan they were to set up the *tabernacle* on a *high place*, and upon this and upon no other they were to worship Jehovah. This was the *high place* (1 Sam. 9:12 foll.; 1 K. 3:4). But the Israelites followed the custom of the country, and set up idol worship on every high hill, and the word *high place* (*Bamah*), or in the plural *high places* (*Bamoth*), became a by-word. (Cf. *Bamoth Baal*, Josh. 13:17.) *Bamoth* occurs on the Moabitic stone, which records the erection of high places in honor of Kamos (Chemosh). B. C.

The significance of this verse 29 seems to be that God protested against those localities for worship; but the people insisted and still kept up the usage under that name well known among themselves and deeply offensive and odious to their God. In harmony with this the psalmist says (78:58), "For they provoked Him to anger with their *high places*." H. C.

The threatenings which are pronounced against the Jews in this chapter should act as a warning to all who read it. God had given them a law which was *holy, just and good*; but their disobedience and want of faith converted into a curse what was intended for a blessing. On us also has God bestowed a still more valuable blessing, even the promise of redemption and sanctification through Christ Jesus. But in order to attain this blessing certain conditions must be fulfilled; we also must walk in His statutes, keep His judgments and hallow His Sabbaths. If we examine our hearts and lives, it will but too plainly appear how greatly we have failed in fulfilling our part of this holy covenant. Let us then earnestly entreat the Lord to pardon our innumerable transgressions, and to loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the evils that we have committed. So shall we escape the heavy vengeance with which we are threatened, the mercy of God will pardon our past backslidings, and our perseverance in a righteous course will, through the mercies of our Redeemer, entitle us to a share in that heavenly Canaan, of which a land flowing with milk and honey gives but a faint resemblance. *Travell.*

**33-38.** Here the tone changes to exhortation and promise. God would yet put forth His

mighty hand to redeem a remnant and restore them to piety and to consequent prosperity. The temptation to be like the heathen must be withstood and its very thought repelled. Verses 35, 36 are a beautiful analogy between this process of discipline and that by which the Lord sifted, proved and tried His people in the wilderness of Sinai. So also in Hos. 2 : 14-23. The cases are not only analogous in the principle involved, but in the means used and even partially in the minute point of a wilderness life, for these exiles were led forth through a long wilderness route from Canaan to Chaldea. "I will cause you to pass under the rod," looks to the usage of shepherds in numbering their flocks, perhaps nightly as they entered the fold, or after a purchase, to verify the number. So God will bring His dear people carefully into His fold, taking pains to see that all are there, and consecrating them to Himself. The sifting processes of His providence will expel the rebels of unsubdued heart. They will never return to His land.

**39-41.** The scope of verse 39 I take to be, Play the hypocrite with Me no longer. If ye will persist in serving idols, go on ; but cease to mix up the worship of idols with the worship of the living God ! No more pollute Me, My name and My temple, with your gifts and

idols. For lo, in My holy mountain there shall be none but pure hearts and true lives. Hypocrites can have no place there. There I will accept the honest and faithful worshippers ; they shall penitently loathe and forsake their abominations, and shall know in their own blessed experience that I am the Lord their Saviour and Redeemer. This strain of promise is eminently precious after so long and so terrible a recital of God's holy displeasure against His apostate people, His grievous heart-trials with them, and His fearful judgments upon them. At this point our Hebrew Bibles close this chapter. It is manifestly the close of this special theme and strain. The remaining verses (45-49) belong properly to the next chapter. II C.

**41.** *And ye shall know that I am the Lord.* As in the height of God's vengeance on the sins of this wretched people, the distant prospect always terminated in a mercy ; so with a mercy and a promise of better times the whole of this prophetic scene is closed, in order that those to whom it is addressed should, however criminal, not be left in an utter state of desperation, but be afforded some shadow of repose in the prospect of future peace and tranquillity. The idea of mercy is naturally attached to that of repentance and reformation ; and with mercy the prophecy ends. *Ep. Warburton.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XX. 45-49 ; XXI.

**20 : 45, 46** AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop *thy word* toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the 47 field in the South ; and say to the forest of the South, Hear the word of the LORD : Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree : the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the 48 south to the north shall be burnt thereby. And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kin- 49 dled it : it shall not be quenched. Then said I, Ah Lord God ! they say of me, Is he not a speaker of parables ?

**21 : 1, 2** And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop *thy word* toward the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel ; 3 and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD : Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, 4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my 5 sword go forth out of its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north : and all flesh shall know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of its sheath ; it shall not return 6 any more. Sigh therefore, thou son of man ; with the breaking of thy loins and with bitter- 7 ness shalt thou sigh before their eyes. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou ? that thou shalt say, Because of the tidings, for it cometh : and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water ; behold, it cometh, and it shall be done, saith the Lord God.

8, 9 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord : Say, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished : it is sharpened that it may make slaughter : it is furbished that it may be as lightning : shall we then make mirth ? the rod of my son, it contemneth every tree. And it is given to be furbished, that it may be handled : the sword, it is sharpened, yea, it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. Cry and howl, son of man : for it is upon my people, it is upon all the princes of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with my people : smite therefore upon thy thigh. For there is a trial : and what if even the rod that contemneth shall be no more ? saith the Lord God. Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together ; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the deadly wounded : it is the sword of the great one that is deadly wounded, which entereth into their chambers. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may melt, and their stumblings be multiplied : ah ! it is made as lightning, it is pointed for slaughter. Gather thee together, go to the right ; set thyself in array, go to the left ; whithersoever thy face is set. I will also smite mine hands together, and I will satisfy my fury : I the Lord have spoken it.

18, 19 The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come : they twain shall come forth out of one land : and mark out a place, mark it out at the head of the way to the city. Thou shalt appoint a way, for the sword to come to Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination : he shook the arrows to and fro, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver. In his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build forts. And it shall be unto them as a vain divination in their sight, which have sworn oaths unto them : but he bringeth iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken.

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear ; because that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end : thus saith the Lord God : Remove the mitre, and take off the crown : this shall be no more the same : exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it : this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is ; and I will give it him.

28 And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the children of Ammon, and concerning their reproach ; and say thou, A sword, a sword is drawn, for the slaughter it is furbished, to cause it to devour, that it may be as lightning : whilst they see vanity unto thee, whilst they divine lies unto thee, to lay thee upon the necks of the wicked that are deadly wounded, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end. Cause it to return into its sheath. In the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy birth, will I judge thee. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee ; I will blow upon thee with the fire of my wrath : and I will deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, skilful to destroy. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire ; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land ; thou shalt be no more remembered : for I the Lord have spoken it.

**15-19.** This paragraph, which in the Hebrew text, LXX. and Vulgate, commences the twenty-first chapter, has been by our translators attached to the twentieth. It belongs to the following chapter, as it contains a prophecy delivered in a form which is there explained. It may, however, be regarded as a link between the foregoing and following prophecies, being a general introduction to *seven* words of judgment about to be pronounced in development of that which has just been delivered (*Kliffoth*). B. C.

**15-18.** Remarkably the prophets set the face toward the country or the people to whom their prophecies were addressed. (See chap. 6 : 2 and 13 : 17, etc.) "The south" and "the forest of the south field," as here used, are manifestly Jerusalem and Judah, thought of as "the south" for the same reason that Babylon—Ezekiel's residence then—was "the north." Judah and Jerusalem are thought of as a forest which is combustible—fit material for the fires of Jehovah's judgments. A terrible figure of a ruin before which nothing can stand ! H. C.

**46.** There are three Hebrew synonyms, which in English we must render by the one word *south*, denoting the region on the right hand (47: 1), the region of midday, the region of brightness. The variety of terms helps the force of the application. Ezekiel is dwelling by Chebar in the north of Babylonia, from the north the Chaldean army is to come upon Judæa. (See on 1: 4.) B. C.

**49.** *Doth he not speak parables?* A feeling of sad discouragement comes over the prophet as he thinks of delivering this message (verses 46-48), for he remembers how the people received his threatenings from the Lord before, when they were clothed in strongly figurative language. Is it not altogether figurative, say they? How then can we know much about its real meaning? Does not the whole description bear the aspect of great exaggeration? To questions like these it may be replied briefly but most truthfully. Figures of speech are used in every human language, in all ages of time. They come nearer to the idea of a *universal language*, clearly intelligible to all, than any other form or mode of speech.

**Chap. 21.** In this description of judgments from God upon Jerusalem (verses 1-25), and upon Ammon (verses 28-32), the *sword* is made signally prominent—drawn out from the Lord's scabbard, sharpened, polished, gleaming, flashing, and coming down fearfully for its work of slaughter! It is the *chapter of the sword*. If we suppose a connection with the closing words of the chapter previous, we shall see a special pertinence in this figure. The people are saying: These figures and symbols, parables and things of that sort—who can tell how much they mean? To which the Lord replies: "Ye must certainly know what the *sword* means: ye have seen and heard of the *sword*; let the sword therefore be the figure—yet scarcely a figure so much as a terrible reality—in the prophet's foretelling of your doom!" H. C.

**1-7.** The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was intrusted with in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it; but when he complained that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it, and so silence that objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar, and every mouth shall be stopped. H.

**1-5.** Set thy face toward the city to which the

predicted judgments pertain, as in verse 16 and elsewhere. The destruction must be general, embracing both the righteous and the wicked. Since no discrimination is made on the ground of moral character, there can be no discrimination whatever (verses 4-5), but the sword shall cut down all the living from south to north in the land. The Lord's sword is drawn, and will not return to its scabbard till this work is done. H. C.

**3.** If God had permitted *none* to be carried off captive but the *wicked*, their case would be utterly hopeless, as there would be none to set a good example, to preach repentance, to reprove sin, or to show God's willingness to forgive sinners. But God in His mercy permitted many of the *righteous* to be carried off also, that the wicked might not be totally abandoned or put beyond the reach of being saved. Hence both Ezekiel and Daniel, and several others, *prophets and righteous men*, were *thus cut off from the land* and carried into captivity. And how much was God's glory and the good of men promoted by this! What a seed of salvation was sown, even in the heathen countries, by thus *cutting off the righteous with the wicked!* To this we owe, under God, many of the Psalms; the whole of the Book of Ezekiel; all the prophecies of Daniel; the *bright example* of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; the *decees* passed *in favor of the religion of the true God* by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, etc. And to this dispensation of God's merciful providence we owe the *books and example* of Ezra and Nehemiah. Where then is the *injustice*, so loudly declaimed against, of God's thus cutting off *from the land of Judæa the righteous with the wicked?* The *righteous* were not cut off for the *crimes of the wicked* (see chap. 18), nor were these crimes visited upon them; yet several of them shared in the common calamity, but none *perished*. Those that were removed by a violent death—and we shall find few such—got a speedier entrance into eternal glory. A. C.

**9-17.** This passage may be called the Lay of the Sword; it is written in the form of Hebrew poetry, with its characteristic parallelism. It may be translated and arranged as follows:

A sword, a sword, it is sharpened and furbished,  
Sharpened for sore slaughter,  
Furbished for a lightning flash;

Shall we then make merry?

It contemneth the rod of My people,

It contemneth every tree;

It was given for furbishing to be handled,

It is sharpened and furbished to be given into  
the hand of the slayer ;

Cry aloud and howl, O son of man.

The sword is upon My people,

Upon all the princes of Israel,

They are given up to the sword with My people ;

Therefore smite upon thy thigh.

For it is put to the proof, and if it contemneth  
even the rod,

What shall not be ? saith the Lord God.

And thou, son of man, prophesy and strike  
hand upon hand,

And let the sword be thrice doubled ;

This is the sword of the slain,

The sword of the mighty slain, which presseth  
hard upon them,

That the heart may faint

And ruin be multiplied,

Against all their gates have I set My threaten-  
ing sword,

Ah ! it is prepared for a lightning-flash,

Drawn for slaughter.

Gather thyself up, O sword, to the right or to  
the left,

Whithersoever thy path is determined.

I also will strike hand on hand,

And will cause my fury to abide,

I the Lord have said it.

B. C.

**18-27.** The prophet, in the verses before, had showed them the sword coming ; he here shows them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way. H.

**18-20.** The object here seems to be to indicate the process by which the king of Babylon would decide by a sort of lot which course to take first, whether toward Ammon or toward Jerusalem. The statements imply that the prophet was to go through the usual ceremonies symbolically, to make a stronger impression of the facts upon the people. Taking his position at the head of the way leading to the city, he marked out one way leading to Jerusalem ; another to the country of Ammon. Both led out from the one hand of Babylon. In the last part of the verse the sense is better given by reading *or* instead of " *and* ; " " To Rabbath of the Ammonites, *or* to Judah in Jerusalem."

**21, 22.** This refers to ancient customs of learning the will of the gods (as supposed) by various forms of divination. Three forms are here. Shaking the arrows (previously labelled) in a bag, and then drawing out one, the label

of which would give the desired answer. Numbers 2 and 3 are noticed frequently in the old classic authors ; consulting images of the gods, and examining the liver of an animal slain for the purpose. If the indications led toward the right hand, then the king of Babylon would (not "appoint captains" but) "put up battering rams"—the same word which the last clause renders in this way. He would also give command for slaughter, or, perhaps, open the mouth in outcry. (So *Giesenius*.) H. C.

**21.** At the head of these two roads the king of Babylon is depicted as standing at the entrance of the Holy Land from the north. To his right is the road to Jerusalem, on the left that to Rabbath-Ammon ; these are the two roads by one or other of which an invading army must march from Babylon to Egypt. He is meditating his campaign, taking divinations after the common fashion of the heathen.

**Shook the arrows.** This mode of divination is one much in practice with the Arabians. Pocock (quoted by Rosenmüller) describes it at length. Before undertaking a journey, marrying a wife, and entering upon any important business, it was usual to place in some vessel three arrows, on one of which was written, "My God orders me ;" on the other, "My God forbids me ;" on the third was no inscription. These three arrows were shaken together until one came out ; if it was the first, the thing was to be done ; if the second, it was to be avoided ; if the third, the arrows were again shaken together until one of the arrows bearing a decided answer should come forth. This method of obtaining an omen by shaking lots together in a hehnet was familiar to the ancient Greeks. (See Hom. "Il.," iii. 316.)

*He looked in the liver.* It was the practice both of the Greeks and the Romans to take omens from the inspection of the entrails (especially the liver) of animals offered in sacrifice. The Romans derived this practice from the Etruscans. These Etruscans seem to have shown their Eastern origin in various ways—their writing was from right to left—the Etrurian chiefs, from whom the young Roman nobles received instruction in the sacred sciences of divination, formed a warlike sacerdotal caste like the Chaldeans. B. C.

Archbishop Potter notices the practice among the Greeks, in which divination was made by arrows shaken together in a quiver. The method of divination practised by the idolatrous Arabs, but forbidden by the Koran, is too singular to be unnoticed. "Seven divining ar-



rows were kept at the temple of Mecca ; but generally in divination, the idolatrous Arabs made use of three only ; on one was written ' My lord hath commanded me ; ' on another, ' My lord hath forbidden me ; ' and the third was blank. If the first was drawn, they looked upon it as an approbation of the enterprise in question ; if the second, they made a contrary conclusion ; but if the third happened to be drawn, they mixed them, and drew over again till a decisive answer was given by one of the others." *Abp. Newcome.*

**22.** *In his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem.* His divinations show that he was to go to the right hand—that is, toward Jerusalem. *Dathius.*—Supposing the face toward the east, the southern branch of the two roads, which was toward the right hand, led toward Jerusalem ; for this city lay to the south of Rabbah. You must represent Nebuchadnezzar as coming from Dan, and marching along the Jordan. Here Rabbah was situated at the left hand, and Jerusalem at the right. *Abp. Newcome.*

The Ammonites appear to have revolted against the Chaldean sway at the same time with the Jews ; and when the king of Babylon commenced his march with the purpose of reducing them to obedience, he seems to have been undecided whether to direct his march against Jerusalem or against Rabbah. When, however, he came to " the parting of the way," to the point where it became necessary to decide in which direction to lead his forces, he resorted to divination to determine the question for him—a favorite resource among the ancients in doubtful contingencies, to save themselves the trouble and responsibility of decision, by casting it upon their gods and their diviners. It is at this point the prophet sets the great king before us. " Appoint a way that the sword may come to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defended. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination : he shook the arrows, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver." The result was that he should go against Jerusalem, for " At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering-rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort." *Kittó.*

**23, 24.** I understand these verses to mean that this divination, taken by the king of Babylon and directing him to besiege Jerusalem,

would be held by the Jews as false and of no account because they had been in sworn allegiance to that king and assumed that they could have peace with him on easy terms again. But that king remembers their iniquity in violating those oaths, and this exasperates him to sterner vengeance. It should be borne in mind that this very king placed Zedekiah on his throne (2 Chron. 36 : 10, 13 ; Jer. 52 : 3 ; Ezek. 17 : 15, 18) under a solemn oath of fidelity to himself as his liege lord. II. C.

**25-27.** The principal passage of any length in this prophet that is amended is the remarkable prediction to Zedekiah, of repeated overthrow in Judah, until the true rightful monarch came (21 : 25-27). In verse 25 the prince of Israel is called " deadly wounded" instead of " profane," for this the original means, indicating that the blow is final. In verse 26, " Remove the diadem and take off the crown," *diadem* is changed to *nître*, showing that both priestly and royal dignities are destroyed. " This shall not be the same" becomes " This shall be no more the same," which is a plainer statement of the perpetuity of the change. Then after a repeated announcement of changes and revolutions, there is added in verse 27 a new assurance, not " and it shall be no more," as the Authorized Version, but " this also shall be no more"—that is, even the apparently final outcome of successive revolutions shall not endure. Nowhere shall there be permanence, but constant fluctuations, until at last the rightful priest upon his throne shall appear. *Chambers.*

From a view of the intense depravity and horrible idolatry of the king and his people, now culminating in perjury against the king of Babylon, the course of thought passes suddenly to direct address to the guilty king now to be slain and of course deposed and stripped of his crown. The passage might be translated, almost literally, thus : " And thou, most wicked prince of Israel ; pierced through with the sword, whose day has come in the time of fatal sin : Thus saith the Lord God : The sacred headband is removed ; the regal crown is taken off ; this shall be no longer this (what it has been) ; the lowly is exalted ; the lofty is brought down ; I will utterly overturn, and even then it shall not be permanent until he comes to whom it belongs ; then I will give it to him." In Zedekiah's utter fall the crown of Judah is vilely cast away : the ancient throne of David seems to be fearfully subverted ; but the Lord's hand is in these revolutions ; He will push them on for His own purposes until the

greater Prince of David's line shall come to whom the eternal promise of David's throne stands sure. Then God will give him that crown and kingdom. It was specially appropriate that this prophecy should indicate the suspension of the functions of the high priest as well as those of the king. Remarkably both were restored by special promise according to the prophecies of Zechariah (chaps. 4: 14; 6: 13) after the return from captivity. Both were united under one head and given to the great Messiah when He ultimately came. Both went down together in this fearful judgment upon the nation for its sin. Both returned together when, through the repentance of the people and the Divine mercy, they returned again to become the Lord's. I will overturn utterly, He to whom "the judgment" or the *right* is can be none other than the great Messiah. The idea of His "*coming*" may tacitly refer to Gen. 49: 10, "*Until Shiloh shall come.*" The term "*come*" is in Hebrew used to designate the Messiah as "*He that should come*"—*g.*, "*Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?*" (Matt. 11: 3). Onkelos, the best of the Chaldee paraphrasts, gives us his paraphrase of Gen. 49: 10, with his eye on our passage: "*Until Messiah come whose is the kingdom.*" Thus the prediction of fearful ruin on Jerusalem and her king and high priest suggests the consummation of the kingdom of God on earth under that great Personage, both King and Priest, who fills the throne of David forever—a glorious Priest on His throne for the joyful salvation of His redeemed people. This passage is rich in its suggestive resources—*e.g.*, that none need fear the results of the revolutions of earthly thrones, determined in the providence of God; that the helm of universal dominion is in hands equal to every emergency, guided by a far-seeing wisdom and evermore evolving events toward the sublime and blessed consummation of God's great purposes of human redemption. These lessons bear toward a peaceful, joyful trust in our Divine Father and Lord, and bid us wait on Him in faith and prayer, and with such labor as we may, till He bring forth His righteousness as the light and His faithfulness in promise as the noonday! H. C.

**25.** *And thou, profane, wicked prince of Israel.* The words are addressed to King Zedekiah, whom the prophet calls "profane" and "wicked," chiefly with respect to his breaking that solemn oath uttered in the name of God, whereby he had engaged himself to be tributary to the king of Babylon (chap. 17: 19). W. Loeth.

**27.** *I will overturn . . . it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.* This is a threat that the kingdom should never recover its former glory and strength, but consume, till the sceptre should be quite taken away from Judah, and way be made for the Messiah, who is He that was to come, whose was the dominion, and to whom the Father would give it; so that the final desolation of the temporal kingdom of the seed of David is here threatened, and the eternal kingdom of the Messiah is promised. The triple use of the word "*overturn*" expresses the certainty of the event. Poole.

It is only redemption now that carries on the counsel of Providence and opens the seals thereof. John's Book of Revelation is a book of Providence all through, celebrating as the crises arrive all the overturnings of Christ's advancing empire, with successive hymns and acclamations; chanting everywhere the Lamb, the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain; sometimes, when public wrong is incorrigible and fierce, the wrath, and always the victory, of the Lamb; closing off at the river that proceeded out of the throne of God and the Lamb; and showing there installed and everlastingly established a glorious and complete Lamb-Providence for the world. Bushnell.

We learn through the living lessons of our own experience that the eternal Gospel covers the facts of life, its sorrows, its needs, its joys, its wealth. Through every conflict the truth is seen in the majesty of its growing vigor. Shakings, shakings not of the earth only, but of the heaven, will come; but what then? We know this, that all that falls is taken away, *that those things which are not shaken may remain.* Bp. Westcott.

**28.** The burden of the Song of the Sword is directed now against the Ammonites, who, exulting in Judah's destruction, fondly deemed that they were themselves to escape. But over them too the like doom is spoken, only with this difference, that for them is no prospect of recovery. For Judah there is yet hope, for Ammon irremediable ruin. B. C.

**28-32.** It was indicated (verses 19-22) that the king of Babylon sought divination to determine which city to attack first in order, Jerusalem or Ammon. Both were in his plan and in God's plan. The one being finished, the other follows as here. Perhaps it stands in this connection with the fall of Jerusalem to show that the Lord tenderly remembers His true people; that He resents the reproaches cast on them by the heathen under their great calamities; and

that it is only *as apostates* that God scourges His own city and nation ; while His sympathies are none the less *against* the wicked heathen nations round about them and *with* His own chosen people. Another prophecy against Ammon, similar in its general tone, appears (chap. 25 : 1-7). In form this passage is legitimately a continuation of the sword chapter (20), the figure of the devouring sword being prominent throughout. H. C.

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabboth, when he turned it upon Jerusalem : upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem ; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance ; the reprieve is not a pardon ; their day also is at hand ; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor sat-

isfaction to them that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed. H.

**20. Cause it to return into its sheath.** The verb is to be taken as imperative. Let the sword return back to its sheath, its work is over. Here ends the stanza of the Lay of the Sword, which, like the other part, is in the form of poetry :

The sword, the sword is drawn ;

It is furbished to slay,

To consume, to flash forth,

In spite of thy false visions and lying divinations,

To give thee over to the heaps of the slain,

Of the wicked whose day is come, the time for the close of their iniquity.

Back, back to thy sheath.

The prophet in the name of Jehovah now turns to address the Ammonites, and reverts to the metaphor of a *consuming fire* which he had employed before (20 : 47). B. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXII.

**22 : 1, 2** MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, And thou, son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city ? then cause her to know all her abominations. And thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord God : A city that sheddeth blood in the midst of her, that her time may come, and that maketh idols against herself to defile her !

**4** Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, and art defiled in thine idols which thou hast made ; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years ; therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the nations, and a mocking to all the countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, thou infamous one and full of tumult. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one according to his power, have been in thee to shed blood. In thee have they set light by father and mother ; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger ; in thee have they wronged the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. Shanderous men have been in thee to shed blood : and in thee they have eaten upon the mountains ; in the midst of thee they have committed lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness : in thee have they humbled her that was unclean in her separation. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife ; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law ; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken bribes to shed blood ; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by oppression, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. Behold, therefore, I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee ? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries ; and I will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

**17, 18** And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is be-

come dross unto me : all of them are brass and tin and iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace ; they are the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Because ye are all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it : so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will lay you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof : and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey : they have devoured souls ; they take treasure and precious things ; they have made her widows many in the midst thereof. Her priests have done violence to my law, and have profaned mine holy things : they have put no difference between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey ; to shed blood, and to destroy souls, that they may get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed for them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery ; yea, they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the fence, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it ; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them ; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath : their own way have I brought upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 22.** The word of the Lord in this chapter sets forth the varied and enormous wickedness of Jerusalem and of Judah. It shows that they were guilty of other sins besides idolatry—indeed, of every other sin named in the Decalogue or known in this depraved world. Here let us bear in mind that this rehearsal and *exposé* of the sins of the Jews still resident in Jerusalem and Judah and now on the eve of their destruction are made before the exiles in Chaldea for the sake specially of the resulting moral influence toward the reformation of those exiles. God would have them understand *why* those terrible judgments were sent on their brethren and fathers and on the city and land of their early homes and early love. H. C.

**1-16.** In these verses the prophet, by a commission from heaven, is set as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her hand as a prisoner at the bar ; and if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God's nation. This prophet is authorized to judge the bloody city—the city of bloods. Jerusalem is so called not only because she had been guilty of the particular sin of bloodshed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes (chap. 7 : 23), such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a

judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two things Ezekiel is to do here. H.

The sins which have brought ruin upon Jerusalem. In this catalogue of sins special reference is made to Lev. 18, and this because the sins there mentioned were especially those which disgraced the heathen inhabitants of Canaan, whom the Israelites were to cast out. The very fact of the commission of like sins would insure like judgment. B. C.

**7.** *In thee have they set light.* The children do not reverence their parents. Parental affection and filial respect do not exist among you. The stranger is not only not succored, but he is oppressed. The widows and fatherless are vexed by wrongs and exactions.

**8.** *Thou hast despised.* All My ordinances are not only neglected, but treated with contempt ; and My Sabbaths profaned. A. C.

**13-15.** "Smitten My hand at thy dishonest gain" is a significant gesture, indicating His purpose to scatter those gains to the winds of heaven and to make solemn requisition for that blood. It was God's own intimation that He would call her to account for those horrible sins. When the hour of her judgment should come, 'Could her heart endure or her hands be strong' *against the Infinite God?* Alas, she

would find that God never lacks agencies and resources for terrific punishment! How vain for frail, weak creatures to stand up against the Almighty! How surely will sinners learn this to their unutterable consternation when the wrath of God shall fall on them to the uttermost! H. C.

**14.** Estrange yourself from God by neglect of prayer, and He will estrange Himself from you: this is to shut out the fulness of God from your soul, to thrust away from you the overture of eternal life! The deathbed reserves its keenest anguish for those who, in the midst of religious advantages, never pray. How shall your heart endure or your hands be strong in the day when He shall deal with those who have thus neglected Him? *R. Hull.*

**17-22.** By a new and expressive figure the people are all said to be mere dross; not gold and silver, but only the refuse matter which is mixed with those precious metals and requires to be expelled by intense heat in the furnace. So the Lord would gather this wicked people, put them into His great furnace, blow upon

them in the fierceness of His wrath, and expel all the impure, worthless matter.

**23, 24.** By yet another figure, the land of Judah is like a field not cleanse of its briars, thorns and weeds, which are fatal to the production of useful plants—nor had it been rained upon. Of course it can be only barren. H. C.

**30.** We are not so to press these words as to assert literally that there was not one righteous man in Jerusalem. Ezekiel speaks in general terms and says that there is not in the city sufficient righteousness to save it from utter destruction. Prince, prophet, priest, all fail. B. C.

**30, 31.** The moral power of the people to recover themselves from their horrible corruptions is prostrate; there is no recuperative force left. Not a man appeared to stem the torrent of this corruption. If the Lord could have found one such strong man to work with himself for the salvation of the people, he would at least have deferred this final outpouring of His wrath in exterminating judgments. But He found none, and hence their ruin was inevitable, and no reason existed for its being longer delayed. H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXIII.

**23: 1, 2** THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: and they committed whoredoms in Egypt: they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. And the names of them were Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister: and they became mine, and they bare sons and daughters. And as for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem Oholibah. And Oholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians *her* neighbours, which were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. And she bestowed her whoredoms upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them: and on whomsoever she doted, with all their idols she defiled herself. Neither hath she left her whoredoms since *the days of* Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the teats of her virginity: and they poured out their whoredom upon her, and I delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and her they slew with the sword: and she became a byword among women; for they executed judgements upon her. And her sister Oholibah saw this, yet was she more corrupt in her doting than she, and in her whoredoms which were more than the whoredoms of her sister. She doted upon the Assyrians, governors and rulers, *her* neighbours, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. And I saw that she was defiled: they both took one way. And she increased her whoredoms: for she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion, girdled with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look upon, after the likeness of the Babylonians in Chaldaea, the land of their nativity. And as soon as she saw them she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldaea. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her soul was alienated from them. So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my soul was alienated from her, like as my soul was alienated from her sister. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, remembering the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt,

20 And she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in the bruising of thy teats by the Egyptians for the breasts of thy youth.

22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy soul is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and rulers all of them, princes and men of renown, all of them riding upon horses. And they shall come against thee with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with an assembly of peoples; they shall set themselves against thee with buckler and shield and helmet round about; and I will commit the judgement unto them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgements. And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal with thee in fury; they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy residue shall fall by the sword; they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. They shall also strip thee of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt; so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hast, into the hand of them from whom thy soul is alienated; and they shall deal with thee in hatred, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare; and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. These things shall be done unto thee, for that thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup unto thine hand. Thus saith the Lord God: Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup, which is deep and large; thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. Thou shalt even drink it and drain it out, and thou shalt gnaw the shreds thereof, and shalt tear thy breasts; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore hear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

36 The Lord said moreover unto me: Son of man, wilt thou judge Oholah and Oholibah? then declare unto them their abominations. For they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery; and they have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass through the fire, unto them to be devoured. Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house. And furthermore ye have sent for men that come from far: unto whom a messenger was sent, and, lo, they came; for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thine eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments; and satest upon a stately bed, with a table prepared before it, whereupon thou didst set mine incense and mine oil. And the voice of a multitude being at ease was with her; and with men of the common sort were brought drunkards from the wilderness; and they put bracelets upon the hands of them *within*, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. Then said I of her that was old in adulteries, Now will they commit whoredoms with her, and she *with them*. And they went in unto her, as they go in unto an harlot; so went they in unto Oholah and unto Oholibah, the lewd women. And righteous men, they shall judge them with the judgement of adulteresses, and with the judgement of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. For thus saith the Lord God: I will bring up an assembly against them, and will give them to be tossed to and fro and spoiled. And the assembly shall stone them with stones, and despatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

**Chap. 23.** The allegory of Aholah and Aholibah. This chapter closely resembles chap. 16. Idolatry is represented by the same figure, but here there are two sisters instead of one woman. Aholah (Israel) is, however, chiefly introduced in order to heighten Aholibah's (Judah's) guilt. In chap. 16 there is more expostulation, appeal to God's love and mercy shown in past time. Here the tone is that of warning and of judgment, the close of the sevenfold reply to the elders of Israel. (See Jer. 3: 7, on

which the allegory may have been founded.) B. C.

In this chapter, the figure by which the Lord represents the idolatry of His people as adultery assumes a bolder form than usual, and is carried out with very great minuteness both in respect to the sin and its punishment. The whole representation is intensely keen and caustic, setting forth in a most revolting light the great crimes of the Jewish people in the line of idolatry, and adapted to fill them with a sense of

shame and self-loathing. In a few passages our translation fails to give the full strength of the original, but the nature of the subject ought perhaps to excuse the omission of any more amplifying details. The ultimate sense of the whole is plain. Samaria and Jerusalem are called "Aholah" and "Aholibah." As harlots, they began their harlot life with Egypt; continued it with Assyria, the Chaldeans and the people of the desert; pushed their idolatry even to the extent of burning alive their children, God's own sons and daughters, and of desecrating His very sanctuary with their idols; and then, being put on trial under Hebrew law before righteous men, they suffer the doom of adulteresses, on whose hands is the blood of murder also; they are stoned with stones and their houses burned with fire. Thus the land is cleansed of the abominations of its spiritual whoredom; it bears the sins of its idols, and Desolation sits upon the ruins of those cities—a living memorial of God's righteous jealousy against His apostate people! II. C.

In this chapter there are many of what we would call indelicate expressions, because a parallel is run between *idolatry* and *prostitution*; and the circumstances of the latter illustrate the peculiarities of the former. Ezekiel was among the Jews what Juvenal was among the Romans—a rough reprover of the most abominable vices. They both spoke of things as they found them; stripped vice naked and scourged it publicly. A. C.—The style of this chapter, like that of chap. 16, is adapted to men among whom at that time no refinement subsisted. Large allowance must be made for language addressed to an ancient Eastern people, in the worst period of their history; all whose ideas were sensual, and whose grand inducement to idolatry seems to have been the brutal impurities which it encouraged. *Abp. Neumeier.*

**1-10.** God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now His word comes again; for God speaks the same thing once, yea twice, yea many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for man perceives it not. Note: To convince sinners of the evil of sin and of their misery and danger by reason of it, there is need of line upon line, so loath we are to know the worst of ourselves. The sinners that are here to be exposed are two women, two kingdoms, sister-kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters of one mother, having been for a long time but one people. Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. II.

**4.** *And the names of them were.* Both of these divided people had their names from a tent or tabernacle. Israel, which is the greater part of the Ten Tribes, is Aholah, "her own tabernacle," which she would needs erect according to her own device, to draw away clients from My Temple. Judah is Aholibah, "My tent or tabernacle in her;" because of the place of My worship settled there. *Rp. Holl.*

**11.** Jerusalem was worse than Samaria as having sinned against greater light, more sacred vows and obligations, and especially in the presence of the very Temple of the holy God! II. C.

**14.** *Portrayed upon the wall.* The monuments of Nineveh recently discovered show how the walls of its palaces were adorned with figures precisely answering to this description. These figures represented princes and kings, warriors and battles; the head-dresses of the princes were high turbans, and the striking countenances and majestic appearances of the kings as thus represented accords well with Ezekiel's words, *all of them princes to look upon.* There is evidence that these sculptures were highly colored with vermilion, or, rather, red ochre. (See Layard's "Monuments of Nineveh" and Vaux's "Nineveh and Persopolis.") The Babylonians and Assyrians were so closely connected in origin and in customs, that there can be little doubt that the magnificent palaces of Nebuchadnezzar were similarly adorned, and that the Nineveh remains faithfully represent the sculptures of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was no less distinguished for his mighty buildings than for his vast conquests, and it is remarkable that the records of Nebuchadnezzar, hitherto deciphered, contain full particulars as to his buildings, but do not (as in the Assyrian palaces) refer to foreign conquests. These conquests are undoubted, and may be recorded in inscriptions yet to be discovered—but the prominence given to works of architecture is in accord with Dan. 4:30. (See Ménant's "Babylone et la Chaldée," p. 197 foll.) B. C.

**14-16.** This representation was specially pertinent from the lips of Ezekiel to the Jewish exiles then in Chaldea, being well adapted to make them abhor these seductive temptations which addressed themselves not infrequently (we must suppose) to their eyes. II. C.

**19.** *Egypt.* The kings of Judah played alternately Egypt against Babylon, and Babylon against Egypt. Jehoiachaz was displaced by Necho for Jehoiakim, who then turned to the Chaldeans, and afterward in his rebellion sought aid from Egypt. So Zedekiah was continually

meditating help from Egypt, against which Jeremiah and Ezekiel were continually protesting. B. C.

**38, 39.** The figure is here in part dropped and literal statements appear, perhaps because no possible turn of the figure could adequately represent the enormity of burning their own children in the fire, or of desecrating the very Temple of the living God with their idols. The view given of the dreadful guilt of the Jews is heightened by the repeated statement that after burning their own children to idol gods they went *on the same day* into God's holy Temple, and with bloody hands profaned His sanctuary.

Abating the intensely revolting nature of this description and the repugnance of its de-

tails to our sense of delicacy, the whole description is pungent and thrilling, and must have been full of moral power upon the heart and conscience of the men to whom it was originally spoken. One may well suppose it would make their ears tingle and their cheeks crimson with a sense of shame for their people and their beloved city. We naturally incline to pass by such a chapter unread; yet let us not forget that to the Jewish exiles of Ezekiel's day its features that are revolting to us would be scarcely if at all objectionable, and then that its caustic and terribly truthful severity must have made its testimony against the guilt of Jerusalem burn itself into the very heart and soul of the people. The siege was within a few months of its commencement. These were the last words of the prophet prior to his announcement that the siege had begun. H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXIV.

**24:1** AGAIN, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even* of this selfsame day: the king of Babylon drew close unto Jerusalem this selfsame day.  
**3** And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God,  
**4** Set on the caldron, set it on, and also pour water into it: gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. Take the choice of the flock, and pile also the bones under it: make it boil well; yea, let the bones thereof be seethed in the midst of it.  
**6** Wherefore thus saith the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city, to the caldron whose rust is therein, and whose rust is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; no lot is fallen upon it. For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust; that it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance, I have set her blood upon the bare rock, that it should not be covered. There-  
**10** fore thus saith the Lord God: Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile great. Heap on the wood, make the fire hot, boil well the flesh, and make thick the broth, and let the bones be burned. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that it may be hot, and the brass thereof may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the rust of it may be consumed. She hath wearied *herself* with toil; yet her great rust goeth not forth out of her; her rust *goeth not forth* by fire. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have satisfied my fury upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.  
**15, 16** Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead, bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died: and I did in the morning as I was commanded. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? Then I said unto them, The word of the



21 LORD came unto me, saying, Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth ; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left behind shall 22 fall by the sword. And ye shall do as I have done : ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the 23 bread of men. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet : ye shall not mourn nor weep ; but ye shall pine away in your iniquities, and moan one toward 24 another. Thus shall Ezekiel be unto you a sign ; according to all that he hath done shall ye do : when this cometh, then shall ye know that I am the Lord God.

25 And thou, son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart, their 26 sons and their daughters, that in that day he that escapeth shall come unto thee, to cause 27 thee to hear it with thine ears ? In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb ; so shalt thou be a sign unto them ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

**Chap. 24.** This chapter bears a new date—viz., the very day in which Nebuchadnezzar commenced the siege of Jerusalem, and two years and five months later than the last preceding date (20 : 1). It is in two parts—the first part (verses 3-14) presenting the confirmed wickedness of Jerusalem and God's efforts to cleanse it out, under the figure of a pot foul with rust, yet not cleansed by use, and incapable of being cleansed till it is set empty upon a hot fire and the very brass itself thoroughly heated and burned. In the second part (verses 15-27) the prophet's wife suddenly dies ; he is forbidden to manifest his grief in the usual modes, showing the people thus that the calamities of their nation will be too great to admit of the common public manifestations of mourning. H. C.

Ezekiel is commissioned to announce to his fellow-exiles that the destruction of Jerusalem, which he had so long foretold, was now in course of execution, that the siege had actually begun. This he is to declare (1) by a parable—of the boiling pot (verses 1-14), (2) by a symbolical act—the abstaining from the usual outward mourning for his wife's death.

**1.** The day mentioned here was the very day on which Nebuchadnezzar completed his arrangements for the siege, and closed in the city (2 K. 25 : 1 ; Jer. 52 : 4). After the captivity this day was regularly observed as a fast day—the fast of the tenth month (Zech. 8 : 19). B. C.

The precise day on which the siege of Jerusalem commenced is on record 2 K. 25 : 1 and Jer. 52 : 4 ; precisely as here. Omitting only the day of the month, the same date appears in Jer. 39 : 1. Of course this was one of the ever-memorable days of Jewish history, long observed as a day of fasting. (See Zech. 8 : 19.) It was an impressive fact to the exiles. They must have seen in it new proof of the failure of their long-cherished hopes. H. C.

**2.** "Jerusalem this same day." It was many miles, it was many days' journey from Jerusalem to Babylon ; perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army is set down before it. As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God and under His view. He tells it the prophet that the prophet might tell it the people, that so when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer that, since he was right in his news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with heaven. H.

That Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar knew what was taking place at Jerusalem on the very day of its occurrence may be a difficulty to those expositors who deny that God can make any prophetic communication, but need not incline us to discover with them in this passage a prediction after the event. *Kliefoth.*

**3.** *Set on a pot.* This figure bears allusion to the sacred rites of the Temple, and therefore nothing low or mean was associated with it in the ideas of the Jews, to whom the prophecy was directed. *Bp. Louth.*—Under the same image of a *boiling pot*, Jeremiah had represented the siege of Jerusalem (1 : 13). Ezekiel was a priest ; the action of boiling pots was familiar to him, as these things were much in use in the Temple service. A. C.

**3-5.** Inasmuch as this is distinctly declared to be a *parable*, we cannot suppose it to have been a real symbolic transaction performed before the eyes of the people, nor yet a vision

shown to the prophet by the Divine Spirit. It is rather a *supposed transaction*, designed to represent certain analogous points in the case of the city of Jerusalem, its people and its pollutions. The pot of brass represents the city; its contents of flesh and bones are the inhabitants; and the rust ("seum") and foulness of the pot stand for the abominations of the city, the deep pollutions of society which had hardened and become incrustated upon the inner surface of the pot, and could be removed by no ordinary process. The first step in the operation is described in these verses. Fill it with water, flesh and bones; set it over a hot fire, and boil it thoroughly. See what *discipline* will do toward reform.

**6-10.** Verses 6 and 11 intimate that after the failure of this effort the pot is entirely emptied of its flesh and bones—*i. e.*, the city is emptied of its people, and then the city itself (the pot) is subjected to intense heat, to burn off its pollutions.

**11-14.** Verse 12 should be read, "It," the pot, has wearied itself, not with "lies," but with its great "*labor*"—*i. e.*, to cleanse itself of its rust and filth; "but its great filth will not go forth from it, not even by the fire." This verse aims to say that this long protracted and varied effort of God in His providence to reform the people and cleanse the city had been in vain. So verse 13 teaches. In thy filthiness is *purposed* wickedness (so the Hebrew implies)—the deep, persistent, malign purpose to push madly on in rebellion. Because I have sought to purge thee, yet with no success, I shall make no further effort till I pour out My wrath on thee to abide upon thee, through a long captivity. God has spoken and will do it! This is the outcome of the "parable." The Lord despairs of cleansing the city from its fixed incrustations of corruption—the residuum of crime hardened on at the bottom of society, and consequently leavening the whole mass with its pollution; and withal adhering so tenaciously that no ordinary heat and no other possible appliances will remove it and cleanse the vessel. So the city must be emptied of all its inhabitants and then be thoroughly burned to the ground. H. C.

**15-27.** These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for, after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, yet he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after (chap. 33: 21). He had assured

them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. H.

**16-27.** The death of Ezekiel's wife took place in the evening of the same day that he delivered the foregoing prophecy. This event was to signify to the people that the Lord would take from them all that was most dear to them—temple, home, friends and possessions. The behavior of the prophet was to show his fellow-exiles that the condition of the people would be such as to give no room for the common expression of mourning. Compare Jer. 16: 5, *they shall not lament or bemoan the dead*; they would grieve for their sins and their punishment, but the times that were coming were so extraordinary as to leave no room for the quiet lamentation for the dead according to the usual forms of mourning. B. C.

**16, 17.** This beautiful descriptive epithet, "the desire of thine eyes," is shown (verse 18) to mean his wife—an object ever grateful to the eye and dear to the heart. The Lord says, I am about to take her away at one stroke, and you must refrain from all the usual manifestations of grief. The shock of a sore calamity is sometimes too great for tears, too overwhelming to allow one thought upon the forms and manifestations of sorrow. When men die by tens of thousands on the field of battle, who finds time or thought for sighs or for the drapery of woe! So, in the destruction of the Temple and the fall of the great city of their fathers' sepulchres, in the slaughter by thousands of their own fathers, brothers, sisters—they might well spare the habiliments of grief and omit all its usual symbols. Such seems to have been the lesson intended in this startling, appalling scene. Verse 17 defines and forbids the usual indications of public mourning. H. C.

**17.** *Bind the tire of thine head upon thee.* The *tire* was the mitre worn by the priest. One of the signs of mourning was to *cover the head* (2 Sam. 15: 30; Jer. 14: 3); another was to *sprinkle ashes upon the head* (27: 39; 1 Sam. 4: 12; 2 Sam. 15: 32). It was forbidden to the high priest to *uncover his head* (Lev. 21: 10), because the anointing oil had been upon him—that is, he was not to defile his head with ashes sprinkled upon it. The *covering of the head* adopted by mourners must have been different from the usual dress, and so in either case the ordinary covering was removed, to be replaced either by ashes or by a mourning veil. Although the high-priest was to abstain from out-

ward signs of mourning, and in a particular case a similar course was prescribed to the priests Eleazar and Ithamar (Lev. 10: 6), the priest in general was to mourn for his dead (Lev. 21: 1 foll.), and so Ezekiel was to be an exception to the rule. Another sign of mourning was to go *barefoot* (2 Sam. 15: 30), see on Jer. 13: 22; another to *cover the lower part of the face* (Micah 3: 7).

*Eat not the bread of men.* It was customary at funerals to have food supplied for the comfort of the mourners, and this is the origin of the funeral feasts, so common among all nations. *Bread of men*—i.e., bread commonly used by *men* on such occasions. Jerome, "bread of mourners." From such food Ezekiel is to abstain. Compare Jer. 16: 7, *neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or mother.* B. C.

A strange and deep interest belongs to one of the incidents in the personal history of Ezekiel which the course of this prophecy discloses. His wife was very dear to him; for she is called "the desire of his eyes." He knew that they must one day be parted. He must die; she too must die—which first was known to God only. But there was nothing in his age or state of health, nor anything in hers, to suggest that this hour of calamity was near; and probably Ezekiel, although a prophet, did as most men do in regard to this matter—refused to let his mind rest upon it, or to contemplate it with any steadiness. Doubt not, therefore, that Ezekiel felt as any one of us would feel on receiving the intimation: "Son of man, behold I take away the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." The very terms in which it is conveyed aggravates the agony it is suited to inflict, by reminding of the value of that which he was thus suddenly to lose. She was described to him as "the desire of his eyes;" and she is to be taken from him—not through the painful but soothing warnings of the sick-bed, by which the mind is gradually prepared to meet the worst, but suddenly "by a stroke," quick and sharp. Consider what that loss was to him. That she was a good and loving woman is implied throughout. Besides, he was now in captivity among the Babylonians; and his wife was no doubt a sweet companion and comfort to him in the midst of all the reproaches, troubles, and difficulties he met with. And she was to be taken by one of those strokes which wound the survivors so deeply that but for the slight preparation this very intimation offered, it may well be thought that even Ezekiel, being, though a prophet, a man such as

we are, might himself also have sunk, heart-smitten by the stroke. Hence there was graciousness to him in this intimation, hard though it were.

Do we not hear the exceeding sharp and bitter cry which this intimation drew from him? Do we not see the hot tears which it wrung from eyes unused to weep, and for that reason more hot and bitter? We hear nothing of this: we see nothing. The desire of his eyes is not only to die, but must die unlamented, save in his heart. He must "make no mourning" for her; he must "bind the tire upon his head" as usual, and not suffer his locks to float wild for her; he must "put on his shoes upon his feet," and not walk "softly and barefoot for her"—nor for her "cover his lips," nor "eat the bread of men." These were acts of mourning from which he was interdicted; and it was hard to omit them. The world might look upon it as a heartless indifference to the memory of one so loved; and the neglect of customary observances of mourning on the part of the living was deemed an insult to the dead. This was hard. But there was something harder yet. "Thou shalt not mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down." The other inhibitions had been easy to this. These touched but the outer mourning; these the inner—the mourning of the heart.

And what did the prophet say to all this? He said nothing. It was of the Lord. And what did he do? He knew that this was for a sign; and with this doom over the wife of his youth, so soon to be accomplished, he girded up the loins of his mind to his public duty, and told the people of this strange and solemn matter, which it is needful they should understand. And what then? "In the evening my wife died." And what more? "And I did in the morning as I was commanded."

These simple intimations reach the utmost sublimity of moral grandeur—nay, more than that, of devout, and therefore absolute submission to Him who doeth all things well. It was in this conviction, in the firm persuasion that the Lord laid this burden upon him not needlessly, but most wisely; not in anger, but with love and pity for the soul he wounded, that, like another of old, he could say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth—because Thou didst it;" and followed the great example of him of whom it is said, "And Aaron held his peace," when his sons died before his eyes. Nay, more. It is not enough to say that he submitted to this dispensation. He acquiesced in it; because he knew that it was intended for

the benefit of his people, as completing by the most signal and impressive of all that series of literal and symbolical warnings by which he had labored to gain the attention of his people, and to stay their downward course to ruin.

Observe well that all commentators perceive an interval of time between this chapter and those that follow—this being the last of the prophecies delivered before the destruction of Jerusalem. He is allowed to rest awhile in his sorrows, public and private; and when he comes forth again, it is to speak in an altered strain, denouncing the doom of the nations which had afflicted Israel, or had exulted in her fall; and to declare the glory and blessedness which the great future had in store.

Now he was to stand as "a sign to them" from the Lord: "According to all that he hath done, shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord." They also should lose "the desire of their eyes"—the city and Temple of their fathers should be brought low unto the dust; and their beloved ones should perish by the sword. Yet they should not dare, nor find occasion to satisfy their griefs with customary mournings, though they "might mourn inwardly, and pine away for their iniquities."

That this deep and sad lesson might be the more effectually taught, the devoted prophet was willing even to yield up "the desire of his eyes." He knew it would not be lost or fail of its effect. For although it should avail not for anterior warning, it would for subsequent conviction. When these things had befallen them, they would remember these forewarnings, and be constrained to acknowledge that their doom had indeed come from God, and had been most righteously inflicted; and would be among the agencies tending to that reformation that actually took place, which the prophet himself lived to witness, and in which he found the rich reward of his labors and sufferings. For these results, which it is clear he was permitted to contemplate, this great prophet was willing to take up this cross—the heaviest, one may say, that man was ever called to bear.

"Let the Lord's servants in every age copy after this instructive example. Let them come here from time to time and contemplate one of Heaven's noblest witnesses, struggling to the last, if haply he might do something to stem the swelling tide of evil; and even at the last, when all has proved ineffectual, still readily offering himself upon the sacrifice and service—not, indeed, of the people's faith, but still of

their highest well-being, which he sought with a fervor and devotion unknown to themselves. With such a lofty spirit of consecration to the work of God, what enterprises of philanthropy might not be undertaken, and what triumphs ultimately won!" (*Fairbairn*). *Kitto*.

**18.** Since it was to be done before the people for a *sign* to them, the morning of the ensuing day would be the earliest time possible, and the proper time for obeying this Divine command.

**19-21.** The attention of the people is arrested, and they inquire what all this signifies *to themselves*. The answer is definite. Remarkably it makes special account of the destruction of the Temple and of the slaughter of their own sons and daughters left behind in their fatherland.

**24.** "A *sign* unto you;" a visible, significant symbol of what is to befall you, and of what you must do and also of what you may *not* do under an infliction of calamity analogous to his. II. C.

**25.** The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in. In that day, that terrible day, when the city should be broken up, I will take from them that which they depended on; their strength, their walls, their treasures, their fortifications, their men of war, none shall stand them instead. That which they boasted of; the joy of their glory, that which they looked upon as most their glory, and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their god, and the palaces of their princes. That which they delighted in; which was the desire of their eyes, and on which they set their minds. Their sons and their daughters were all this their strength, and joy, and glory; and these shall go into captivity. II.

**27.** In view of this case of the death of the prophet's wife, let us not omit to note that the Lord spared no pains and shrink from no sacrifices to make deep and solemn impressions on the minds of the exiles. II. C.—He was suspended from prophesying against them in the mean time, because, Jerusalem being besieged, his prophecies could not be sent into the city; because, when God was speaking so loud by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word, and because then the accomplishments of His prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for. Thus Christ forbade His disciples to preach openly that He was Christ till after His resurrection, because that

was to be the full proof of it. But then thou shalt speak with the greater assurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confusion. II.

*In that day shall thy mouth be opened.* That is, when some one who shall have escaped from Jerusalem, having arrived among the captives, shall inform them of the destruction of the city, the Temple, the royal family and the people at large; till then he might suppress his tears and lamentations. And we find from chap. 33 : 21 that one did actually escape from the city, and informed the prophet and his brethren in captivity that the *city was smitten*. Thus he was not only a prophet to foretell such things, but he was also a *sign* or *portent*, shadowing them out by circumstances in his own person and family; and thus the prediction, agreeing so perfectly with the event, proved that the previous information was from the Lord. A. C.

Ezekiel was a sign to the house of Israel in various instances, and described by sensible representations the miseries which God was about to bring upon that people. That his predictions were fully accomplished we learn from the conclusion of the books of Kings and Chronicles; from the 39th and 52d chapters of Jeremiah; and most particularly from the

Lamentations of that prophet, who was an eye witness of the desolations of his country and the captivity of his people. *Amos*.

At this point, the first part of Ezekiel's prophecies ends and the second begins. He closes a long series of messages, varied in their forms and modes of revealing truth, but scarcely varying at all in their grand theme and purpose—viz., to set before the exiles the enormity of their national sin, the great wickedness and the deep corruption of Judah and Jerusalem; the certainty that the Lord would abandon His Temple, city and people there to destruction, and the terribleness of that doom. The manifest purpose of God in these revelations to the exiles was to convince them of His justice in those judgments; to give them a full sense of those sins, and to lead them to personal and sincere repentance and radical reformation, until they should themselves be ashamed and confounded, and never open their mouth any more for shame for their own sins and those of their people and land. So a remnant are to be reclaimed and made the nucleus in future years for replanting the land of promise, and for restoring both their political and religious institutions. II. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXV.

- 25 : 1, 2** AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward  
 3 the children of Ammon, and prophesy against them; and say unto the children of Ammon,  
 Hear the word of the Lord God; thus saith the Lord God: Because thou saidst, Aha, against  
 4 my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was made deso-  
 late; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; therefore behold, I  
 5 will deliver thee to the children of the east for a possession, and they shall set their encamp-  
 ments in thee, and make their dwellings in thee; they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall  
 6 drink thy milk. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the children of Ammon  
 7 a couching place for flocks; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the Lord  
 God: Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced with  
 8 all the despite of thy soul against the land of Israel; therefore behold, I have stretched out  
 mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the nations; and I will cut thee off  
 from the peoples, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries; I will destroy thee;  
 and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.  
 9 Thus saith the Lord God: Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah  
 is like unto all the nations; therefore behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities,  
 10 from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal  
 meon, and Kiriathaim, unto the children of the east, to go against the children of Ammon,  
 and I will give them for a possession, that the children of Ammon may not be remembered  
 11 among the nations; and I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I  
 am the Lord.  
 12 Thus saith the Lord God: Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by  
 13 taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; therefore  
 thus saith the Lord God, I will stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and  
 beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; even unto Dedan shall they fall by

- 14 the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury: and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God.
- 15 Thus saith the Lord God: Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with despite of soul to destroy it with perpetual enmity; therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

#### WORDS OF JUDGMENT TO HEATHEN NATIONS.

##### *Chaps. 25-32.*

It was a distinct part of scriptural prophecy to address heathen nations. This was variously done by the several prophets according to the varieties of time and place. Some, as Obadiah (to Edom) and Nahum (to Nineveh), addressed one such nation and no others. More commonly the prophecies to the chosen people and to the heathen were intermixed, as by Amos and Joel. In Isaiah (13-19) and Jeremiah (46-51) and Ezekiel, one section is specially devoted to a collection of such prophecies. Besides the special message to the nation addressed, every such prediction had the general purpose of exhibiting the conflict ever waging between the servants of God and the powers of the world, and of declaring the Divine decrees as to the issue of this conflict. This general purport is that which concerns us. Tyre and Egypt are overthrown, but there is still a warfare between good and evil, between God and Satan, and in the old prophecies against heathen nations we are to read of the struggle in which the Church of Christ has still to wrestle against her foes (Eph. 6:12), but will surely prevail.

The series of prophecies, with one exception to be noticed in its place, contained in these chapters, was delivered at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, some shortly before and some shortly after the capture of the city. They were collected together to illustrate their original purpose of warning the nations not to exult in their neighbor's fall. In the times of Jerusalem's greatness, the surrounding nations had been her vassals, and when, from time to time, they became independent, they were no doubt regarded by the Jews simply as successful rebels. It is probable that Josiah, in the days of his prosperity, reasserted his right of dominion over Edom and Moab, and that this circumstance increased their pleasure to see the proud city degraded, even though they had often combined with her against a common and greater enemy. The prophet is now commissioned to warn these nations that judgment is coming upon them too, so that they shall be like Jerusalem in her ruin, unlike her in being

without hope of recovery. Seven nations are addressed, which have had most intercourse with the children of Israel—on their eastern borders Moab and Ammon, to the south Edom, on the southwest Philistia, northward Tyre, the merchant city, and the more ancient Sidon (all these encroaching more or less on that which had once been David's and Solomon's kingdom—the full possession granted to Israel, but maintained only for a short time), and lastly Egypt, alternately the scourge and the false stay of the chosen people. Kliefoth lays stress on the number *seven*, symbolical of completeness. *Seven* nations, *seven* prophecies against Egypt the chief of the seven, denote the completeness of the overthrow of the heathen power, the antagonist of the kingdom of God. It is remarkable that while other prophets hold out to these heathen nations some prospect of future mercy (e.g., Isa. 16:14; Jer. 49:6, 11), Ezekiel speaks of complete ruin; the closing burden, *they shall know that I am the Lord*, predicting not so much that they will recognize and turn to Jehovah, as that they will find out by experience His power and judgments (verse 14, *they shall know My vengeance*). Ezekiel prophesied at the time of Jerusalem's overthrow, and so was contemplating *national* ruin. In the case of Jerusalem there would be national restoration, but in the case of the heathens no such recovery. The *national* ruin was irretrievable; the remnant to whom the other prophets hold out hopes of mercy were to find it as individuals to be gathered into God's Church, not as nations to be again set up. Ezekiel does not, like other prophets, prophesy against Babylon. Schrader supposes that the seer abstained from prudential reasons from prophesying against the Chaldeans, among whom he dwelt, but there is little ground for having recourse to such an explanation. The Jews were ready enough to see in Babylon an enemy of God, but it was Ezekiel's mission to show that for the moment Babylon was on the side of Jehovah, the righteous instrument of the Divine wrath, doing God's work in punishing His foes. These seven nations are all mentioned by Jeremiah (25:15 foll.) as bidden to drink of the cup of the fury of the Lord; for

five of them (Egypt and Philistia being excepted) Jeremiah was to make bonds and yokes (Jer. 27:3). B. C.

**Chap. 25.** Exterminating judgments are announced against Ammon (verses 1-7); against Moab (verses 8-11); against Edom (verses 12-14); and against Philistia (verses 15-17)—uniformly for the same national sin—viz., proud exultation over the fall of Judah and Jerusalem, and reproach cast on the name of Israel's God by reason of their fall. Obadiah, nearly at the same time, wrote in the same strain against Edom; Ezek. 35 expands this prophecy against Edom. Jeremiah prophesied against the same four neighboring powers, yet with a somewhat broader view of their national sins and especially of their pride—viz., against Ammon (chap. 49:1-6); Moab (chap. 48); Edom (chap. 49:7-22); and Philistia (chap. 47). So also Isaiah and some of the minor prophets. The scope of these prophecies is designedly consolatory to the true people of God, assuring them that He still remembered Zion with tender affection, regarded her true interests as His own; and therefore would avenge her upon her proud and scornful foes. In this point of light, these prophecies hold an important place among the messages sent of God by Ezekiel to the exiled Jews in Chaldea. Their city in ruins, their nationality prostrate, and themselves in exile and under circumstances of the deepest national discouragement, they needed precisely such assurances of the Lord's tender mercy and of His identity of interest and sympathy with their people as still bearing His name and yet to bear it before all the nations of the earth. All the more did they need such words from Ezekiel, because thus far his messages had spoken of little else than national sin, judgments, and ruin. From this point their subject and tone change. Henceforward, with scarce an exception, his messages are encouraging and consolatory to true hearts. H. C.

The four nations most closely connected with one another by geographical position and by consequent intercourse are grouped together in this chapter, each being addressed in a few brief sentences concluding with the same refrain: *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*. The time of the delivery of this joint prophecy, though not defined by Ezekiel, is made clear by the terms of the prophecy, and by the date of the following chapter. The sanctuary has been profaned, the house of Judah has gone into captivity. For although it is true that these words might have been spoken by pro-

phetic anticipation, there is no need to assume this. In chap. 24 we were told that the siege was begun. The date of chap. 25 is that of its close. We may therefore suppose that this prophecy was delivered immediately after the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, and so is later, in point of time, than some of the prophecies that follow it.

**1-7.** The Ammonites were inveterate foes of the descendants of Abraham. They had joined Eglon, had oppressed Israel in the time of Jephthah, had fought against Saul, David, Jehoshaphat and Jotham. They had joined the Moabites in Nebuchadnezzar's army when he besieged Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoiakim (2 K. 24:2). In the time of Uzziah Amos reproves their cruelty (Amos 1:1, 13); in the time of Josiah, Zephaniah predicts their punishment for boasting against Judah (Zeph. 2:8, 9). Their exultation was against the sanctuary of the Lord, and should therefore the more certainly be punished. Prophecies against Ammon: Amos 1:13-15; Isa. 11:14; Jer. 49:1-6; Zeph. 2:8-11. B. C.

The sin for which Ammon is doomed is here made very definite—exulting triumph over God's polluted Temple, desolate land, and captive people. There the record stands, equally in prophecy and in their history, witnessing that the Lord Almighty will let no people, however powerful or however proud, contain His name with impunity. "The men of the East"—God's executioners of vengeance upon Ammon—were the Chaldeans, raised up in His providence for judgment, not on Judah and Jerusalem alone, but on those contiguous nations which had long been deeply sunk in the same forms of debasing idolatry, and had now filled up the cup of their national sin by malign hostility against Israel and scornful exultation over her fall. They would seize the whole country of Ammon and make her proud capital a stable for camels—significant of an utter overthrow of her nationality. H. C.

**5.** The doom, once denounced, was surely though not immediately executed. Indeed, we do not know exactly *when* it was executed. We only know that it has been done; for, as the prophets foretold of this city, so at this day it lies. Meanwhile, however, it enjoyed a new lease of prosperity and wealth under the name of Philadelphia, which it derived from Ptolemy Philadelphus, who, when the country was annexed to the Egyptian crown, restored or greatly improved the city, and called it by his own name. These foreign names have rarely, however, been permanent in that country; for, while the

new name would be employed by foreigners, and in all State matters, and on coins, the old name remains in use among the great body of the people, and sometimes survives in the ruins long after the foreign name has been forgotten. So, at the ruins of this city, the name of Philadelphia is altogether forgotten while the original name of Rabbath-Ammon exists in the shape of Amman. The very site of the place was unknown until discovered about the beginning of this century by a German traveller called Seetzen. It was visited about twelve years after by Burckhardt, an accomplished Swiss traveller in the service of an English society, and who gave a very full and satisfactory description of the place. Other travellers have since been there—as Captains Irby and Mangles, Mr. Buckingham, M. Laborde, Lord Lindsay, Lord Claud Hamilton, and others; but this district lies so remote that the ancient sites are much less frequented by travellers than those on the nearer side of the Jordan.

The ruins lie in a valley about twenty-two miles east of the Jordan, through which flows a stream of very clear water, full of fish. The remains are very extensive; but there are few of important buildings except an amphitheatre, which is of great size, and is said to be the most perfect in Syria. There is also an ancient castle, and some vestiges of Roman buildings and Christian churches. Altogether, there is sufficient to evince the former importance of the city, suggesting to the mind a melancholy contrast with the desolation in which it now lies. The Arabs, who come up periodically into these parts, like to harbor in such forsaken sites for the sake of the shelter they can find among the ruins for themselves and their flocks, with the additional inducement that water of good quality is usually found in such localities. This is an old custom, and the prophets frequently allude to it as one of the incidents marking the desolation of cities bordering on Arabia. The stream of fine water at Amman doubtless forms an additional attraction to the parties of Arabs who resort to this site of ruins. *Kitto*.

Southeast of Es Salt are the extensive ruins of Amman, situated on either side of a small stream, which has its source in the old town and flows through it. Amman is the Rabbah or Rabbath-Ammon of the Bible, but it afterward received the name of Philadelphia from Ptolemy Philadelphus. The ruins are among the most remarkable in Palestine, and include an immense theatre partly excavated in the rock, a mausoleum, odeum, temples, a church, a citadel, and other public buildings, but they

date from the Roman period, and no traces have yet been discovered of the presence of the Israelites. The whole place is now desolate, and only visited by wandering Bedouin with their flocks, recalling the prophecy of Ezekiel, "I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks" (25:5). Rabbah is the only city of the Ammonites mentioned in the Bible, and its chief interest is derived from the long siege which it sustained during the reign of David; at the end, apparently, of about two years the lower town was taken by Joab; but the citadel remained, and the honor of its capture was reserved for David himself. The importance attached to the operations against Rabbah is attested by the unusual fact of the presence of the ark with the army, and the length of the siege shows that it must have been a place of very great strength. During the period between the Old and New Testaments the town became of great importance, and, as we gather from Josephus, was the scene of several contests. To the southwest of Amman (Rabbath-Ammon) is Heshban (Heshbon), the royal city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, standing on a hill which rises above the general level of the plateau. The existing ruins are of little interest, but there are numerous cisterns and a large reservoir, which may call to mind the passage in the Song of Solomon, "Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon." *Wilson*.

**8.** Prophecies against Moab (Num. 24:17; Isa. 11:14; 15:16; Jer. 48; Amos 2:1-3; Zeph. 2:8-11. Moab lay south of Ammon. Akin to Ammon, this people shared Ammon's implacable hostility to the children of Israel.

*And Seir.* Seir was close to Moab, and therefore mentioned together, as in De. 2:29. Jerome tells us that the LXX omitted the word Seir, feeling probably that the mention of Edom was here out of place. But Edom is identified with Mount Seir in chap. 35, and it is therefore more probable that Seir is here coupled with Moab because, being near neighbors closely leagued together, they expressed a common exultation at Jerusalem's fall.

**10.** *With the Ammonites.* In addition to the Ammonites. (See verse 4.) The Bedouins were not to be conquerors, but the land, having been laid waste by Chaldean armies, was to remain unoccupied except by nomadic hordes. Ammon and Moab, of common origin, whose lands had so often been interchanged, shall now share a common ruin. To the men of the East shall Moab with Ammon be given, that Ammon may



be remembered no more, and judgment be executed on Moab.

**12.** Prophecies against Edom : Num. 24 : 18, 19 ; Isa. 11 : 14 ; Jer. 49 : 7-22, where see notes ; Ezek. 35 ; Joel 3 : 19 ; Amos 1 : 11, 12 ; Obadiah. Edom, so named from Esau, consisted of various tribes enumerated in Gen. 36. The Edomites became a powerful nation before the Israelites came out of Egypt. They were ruled over by kings till David conquered them. They remained subject to the kingdom of Judah till the reign of Joram, when they rebelled and were not again subdued (2 K. 8 : 20). Edom took active part against Jerusalem at the time of its siege and destruction. After this they captured many cities in the south of Palestine, and gave the name to Idumea. These Idumeans were conquered by John Hyrcanus, when many of them adopted the religion of the Jews. In later times the Idumean Herod became king of Palestine as a Jew. B. C.

*Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah.* The Idumeans, being the posterity of Esau, bore an ancient grudge against the Jews on account of their ancestor's losing his right of primogeniture, and the subduing of Edom by David afterward (2 Sam. 8 : 14). Upon both these accounts they took all opportunities of venting their spite toward the Jewish nation particularly. (See 2 Chron. 28 : 17.) The ill-will they showed them in the time of their captivity was very remarkable, as appears by those pathological words of Ps. 137 : 7, "Remember the children of Edom, O Lord, in the day of Jerusalem, how they said, Down with it, down with it, even to the ground." W. Loeeth.

**12, 13.** Special stress is laid on the spirit of retaliation and revenge manifest against Israel in Edom. Of all the nations adjacent to Israel, none seem to have cherished a deeper animosity or a meaner revenge than the descendants of Esau. It was a national spirit, and was specially offensive to God because of their early relationship. Moreover as a Great Father of nations, bound to promote fraternal relations

between them, He could not but frown on this unnatural, supremely selfish and hateful spirit. Let it stand and be understood as God's rebuke against this spirit, whether in nations, families, or individuals. H. C.

**15-17.** Prophecies against the Philistines. Isa. 11 : 14 ; 14 : 29-32 ; Jer. 47 ; Joel 3 : 4 ; Amos 1 : 6-8 ; Zeph. 2 : 4-7. The Philistines occupying lands to the south of Judah were a Hamite race (Gen. 10 : 14), but of a different branch from the Canaanites. They were a thorn in the side of the chosen people throughout. In the time of the judges they oppressed Israel (Judges 10 : 6, 7). Repeatedly defeated by Samson, they again got head ; they overthrew Israel in the time of Eli, slew his sons, and carried off the ark of God. Held in check by Samuel, they had Israel in subjection in the time of Saul, though not without checks and disasters. At Saul's death they were predominant in the south, but David conquered and made them tributaries. We read of their defeats by Jehoshaphat and Uzziah, and of their conquests in the time of Jeheram, showing that they were still formidable neighbors. In the reign of Ahaz they again waxed strong, but were checked by Hezekiah ; in the evil days that followed they became again very powerful, and joined in attacking Jerusalem in the day of her trouble. They were much reduced by the Assyrians (Isa. 14 : 31) and Egyptians (Jer. 47), before the time of this prophecy, but further destruction came upon them in the general ruin of the inhabitants of Canaan, which commenced with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. B. C.

The fatal sin of the Philistines also was their spirit of revenge, animosity, and proud disdain toward Israel. They occupied the country of the sea coast—*i.e.*, along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. In the fulfilment of this prophecy the Lord's vengeance was visited upon them first by the hands of the Chaldeans. From this devastation they never rose again to power. H. C.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XXVI., XXVII., XXVIII.

**26 : 1** AND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the 2 word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, because that Tyre hath said against Jerusalem, Ah, she is broken *that was* the gate of the peoples ; she is turned unto me : I 3 shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste : therefore thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea 4 causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down 5 her towers : I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock. She shall be a

place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea ; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord  
 6 God : and she shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which are in the field  
 7 shall be slain with the sword ; and they shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the  
 Lord God : Behold, I will bring upon Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings,  
 8 from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and a company, and  
 much people. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field : and he shall make  
 9 forts against thee, and cast up a mount against thee, and raise up the buckler against thee.  
 10 And he shall set his battering engines against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break  
 down thy towers. By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee : thy  
 11 walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wagons, and of the chariots, when  
 he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. With the  
 12 hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets : he shall slay thy people with the  
 sword, and the pillars of thy strength shall go down to the ground. And they shall make a  
 13 spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise : and they shall break down thy  
 walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses : and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy  
 14 dust in the midst of the waters. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease ; and the  
 sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee a bare rock : thou shalt  
 be a place for the spreading of nets ; thou shalt be built no more : for I the Lord have  
 spoken it, saith the Lord God.

15 Thus saith the Lord God to Tyre : Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when  
 16 the wounded groan, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee ? Then all the princes  
 of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay aside their robes, and strip off their  
 17 brodered garments : they shall clothe themselves with trembling ; they shall sit upon the  
 ground, and shall tremble every moment, and be astonished at thee. And they shall take up  
 a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of  
 18 seafaring men, the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants,  
 which caused their terror to be on all that haunt it ! Now shall the isles tremble in the day  
 19 of thy fall ; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be dismayed at thy departure. For thus  
 saith the Lord God : When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not in-  
 20 habited ; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and the great waters shall cover thee ;  
 then will I bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, to the people of old time,  
 21 and will make thee to dwell in the nether parts of the earth, in the places that are desolate  
 of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited ; and I will set glory in  
 the land of the living : I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more ; though thou be  
 sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.

27 : 1, 2 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, And thou, son of man, take  
 3 up a lamentation for Tyre ; and say unto Tyre, O thou that dwellest at the entry of the sea,  
 which art the merchant of the peoples unto many isles, thus saith the Lord God : Thou, O  
 4 Tyre, hast said, I am perfect in beauty. Thy borders are in the heart of the seas, thy build-  
 5 ings have perfected thy beauty. They have made all thy planks of fir trees from Senir :  
 6 they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make a mast for thee. Of the oaks of Bashan have  
 they made thine ears ; they have made thy benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood, from the  
 7 isles of Kittim. Of fine linen with brodered work from Egypt was thy sail, that it might  
 8 be to thee for an ensign ; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was thine awning. The  
 inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy rowers : thy wise men, O Tyre, were in thee, they  
 9 were thy pilots. The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers :  
 10 all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. Persia  
 and Lud and Put were in thine army, thy men of war : they hanged the shield and helmet in  
 11 thee ; they set forth thy comeliness. The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy  
 walls round about, and the Gummadiim were in thy towers : they hanged their shields upon  
 12 thy walls round about ; they have perfected thy beauty. Tarshish was thy merchant by rea-  
 son of the multitude of all kinds of riches ; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded for  
 13 thy wares. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy traffickers : they traded the persons  
 14 of men and vessels of brass for thy merchandise. They of the house of Togarmah traded  
 15 for thy wares with horses and war-horses and mules. The men of Dedan were thy traffick-  
 ers ; many isles were the mart of thine hand ; they brought thee in exchange horns of ivory  
 16 and ebony. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of thy handiworks : they  
 traded for thy wares with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral,  
 17 and rubies. Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy traffickers : they traded for thy  
 18 merchandise wheat of Minith, and pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. Damascus was  
 thy merchant for the multitude of thy handiworks, by reason of the multitude of all kinds  
 19 of riches ; with the wine of Helbon, and white wool. Vedan and Javan traded with yarn  
 20 for thy wares : bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were among thy merchandise. Dedan was  
 21 thy trafficker in precious cloths for riding. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they were  
 the merchants of thy hand ; in lambs, and rams, in these were they thy merchants.  
 22 The traffickers of Sheba and Ramah, they were thy traffickers : they traded for thy wares  
 23 with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. Haran and Canneh and Eden,  
 24 the traffickers of Sheba, Asshur and Chilmad, were thy traffickers. These were thy traffick-  
 ers in choice wares, in wrappings of blue and brodered work, and in chests of rich apparel,  
 25 bound with cords and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. The ships of Tarshish were  
 thy caravans for thy merchandise : and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the

26 heart of the seas. Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters : the east wind hath  
 27 broken thee in the heart of the seas. Thy riches, and thy wares, thy merchandise, thy mari-  
 28 ners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of  
 29 war, that are in thee, with all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the  
 30 heart of the seas in the day of thy ruin. At the sound of the cry of thy pilots the suburbs  
 31 shall shake. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, *and* all the pilots of the sea, shall  
 32 come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land, and shall cease their voice to be  
 33 heard over thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall  
 34 wallow themselves in the ashes : and they shall make themselves bald for thee, and gird them  
 35 with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee in bitterness of soul with bitter mourning. And  
 36 in their waiting they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, *saying*, Who  
 37 is there like Tyre, like her that is brought to silence in the midst of the sea? When thy wares  
 38 went forth out of the seas, thou fillest many peoples : thou didst enrich the kings of the  
 39 earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. In the time that thou wast  
 40 broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company did fall  
 41 in the midst of thee. All the inhabitants of the isles are astonished at thee, and their kings  
 42 are horribly afraid, they are troubled in their countenance. The merchants among the peo-  
 43 ples hiss at thee ; thou art become a terror, and thou shalt never be any more.

28 : 1, 2 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto the  
 prince of Tyre, Thus saith the Lord God : Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast  
 said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas ; yet thou art man, and not  
 3 God, though thou didst set thine heart as the heart of God : behold, thou art wiser than  
 4 Daniel ; there is no secret that they can hide from thee : by thy wisdom and by thine under-  
 5 standing thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures.  
 6 By thy great wisdom *and* by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lift-  
 7 ed up because of thy riches : therefore thus saith the Lord God : Because thou hast set thine  
 8 heart as the heart of God ; therefore behold, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of  
 9 the nations : and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they  
 10 shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit ; and thou shalt die the  
 11 deaths of them that are slain, in the heart of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that  
 12 slayeth thee, I am God? but thou art man, and not God, in the hand of him that woundeth  
 13 thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers : for I have  
 14 spoken it, saith the Lord God.

11, 12 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamenta-  
 tion for the king of Tyre, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God : Thou satest upon  
 13 the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast in Eden the garden of God ; every  
 14 precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx,  
 15 and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold : the workmanship of  
 16 thy tabrets and of thy pipes was in thee : in the day that thou wast created they were pre-  
 17 pared. Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth : and I set thee, *so that* thou wast upon  
 18 the holy mountain of God ; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.  
 19 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was  
 20 found in thee. By the multitude of thy traffic they filled the midst of thee with violence,  
 21 and thou hast sinned ; therefore have I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God ; and  
 22 I have destroyed thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart  
 23 was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy bright-  
 24 ness : I have cast thee to the ground, I have laid thee before kings, that they may behold  
 25 thee. By the multitude of thine iniquities, in the unrighteousness of thy traffic, thou hast  
 26 profaned thy sanctuaries ; therefore have I brought forth a fire from the midst of thee, it  
 27 hath devoured thee, and I have turned thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them  
 28 that behold thee. All they that know thee among the peoples shall be astonished at thee :  
 29 thou art become a terror, and thou shalt never be any more.

20, 21 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Zion,  
 22 and prophesy against it, and say, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against thee, O  
 23 Zidon ; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee : and they shall know that I am the Lord,  
 24 when I shall have executed judgements in her, and shall be sanctified in her. For I will  
 25 send into her pestilence and blood in her streets ; and the wounded shall fall in the midst of  
 26 her, with the sword upon her on every side ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.  
 27 And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor a grieving thorn of  
 28 any that are round about them, that did despite unto them ; and they shall know that I am  
 29 the Lord God.

25 Thus saith the Lord God : When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples  
 26 among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the nations,  
 27 then shall they dwell in their own land which I gave to my servant Jacob. And they shall  
 28 dwell securely therein ; yea, they shall build houses, and plant vineyards, and shall dwell  
 29 securely ; when I have executed judgements upon all those that do them despite round  
 30 about them ; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God.

It is the common doctrine of the Hebrew prophets that Jehovah rules all lands, and that He will chastise the heathen. The nations de-

nounced most at length by Ezekiel are Tyre and Egypt. The discourse upon Tyre affords the prophet another extraordinary opportunity

for heaping up particulars. Tyre is the commercial metropolis of the time. She is the queen of the seas. *Bollantine*.

Prophecies against Tyre: Joel 3:4; Amos 1:9, 10; Isa. 23, where see notes. Tyre is mentioned in Josh. 19:29 as a strong city; Isaiah called it the daughter of Sidon (Isa. 23:12); Josephus says that it was built two hundred and forty years before the Temple. Josephus's date is not correct, but may mark the time of the commencement of Tyre's special greatness. B. C.

From Ezekiel's standpoint of view at Babylon, the great nations of the west and southwest were Tyre and Egypt—Tyre, the mistress of the seas, the great emporium of commerce for the civilized world of that age; and Egypt, then as through all ancient time, the powerful sovereignty of Northeastern Africa, sitting upon her fertile Nile, and enjoying a civilization even at that time hoary with the lapse of centuries. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines were subordinate powers, closely contiguous to Palestine indeed, but far less formidable to the great central power at Babylon. Hence a very few words only sufficed to note their fortunes and their fall; while the prophecies against Tyre and Egypt are expanded with very considerable detail—three chapters being devoted to Tyre and four to Egypt. Territorially Tyre had little more than a foothold upon the soil of Western Asia. The city was the empire; but that city, built partly on the main-land yet mostly on a small island which it completely covered, was exceedingly strong by its maritime position; strong by its absolute control over the waters which embosomed it; strong in its vast wealth and consequent ability to hire soldiers and maintain a large army without drawing upon its own population. It must have been strong also through its commercial and intimate relations—*i. g.*, with Carthage, a colony of its own citizens, and with Tartessus in Spain, another of its great trading outposts. Convincing proof of the great strength of Tyre lies in the fact that she withstood the assaults of Nebuchadnezzar during a siege of thirteen years. H. C.

This prophecy respects the same siege of Tyre which is foretold in the 47th chapter of Jeremiah. The profane authors extant in the time of Jerome said nothing of this siege; but the ancient writers of the Phœnician history, which had been read by Josephus, related that Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Tyre in the reign of King Ithobal, and that the siege had lasted thirteen years. Berosus and the Phœnician his-

tory also stated that the king of Chaldea had subdued Phœnicia and Syria; and lastly, Philostratus had spoken of this siege by Nebuchadnezzar. The sole object of this and the two following chapters is the destruction of the city and of the kingdom of Tyre. *Culmet*.

When we consider the extent and effects of the Phœnician commerce, the scanty information concerning it, which we receive from ancient writers, must on a first view appear surprising. But when we recollect that all the Greek historians, Herodotus excepted, who give any account of the Phœnicians, published their works long after the destruction of Tyre by Alexander the Great, we shall cease to wonder at their not having entered into minute details with respect to a trade which was then removed to new seats, and carried on in other channels. But the power and opulence of Tyre, in the prosperous age of its commerce, must have attracted general attention. In this and the two following chapters of Ezekiel, who flourished two hundred and sixty years before the fall of Tyre, there is the most particular account of the nature and variety of its commercial transactions that is to be found in any ancient writer, and which conveys at the same time a magnificent idea of the extensive power of that State. *Dr. Robertson*.

1. The eleventh year mentioned here is the very year of the taking of Jerusalem. It was the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, and of the captivity of Jehoiachin. The particular month is not mentioned. *W. Louth*.

Comparing this date with that of the fall of Jerusalem, as in Jer. 32:6 and 39:2, it will be seen that this was within the same year. Here the month is not given; yet partly for this reason it is supposed to have been the first, since, if it had been any other, the month would have been named. Jerusalem was "broken up" and burned in the fourth month and ninth day in the same year. H. C.

2. Ezekiel here begins his prophecy against the Tyrians with a declaration that it was occasioned by their insulting over the Jews upon the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophets Joel and Amos had before denounced the Divine judgments upon the Tyrians for their wickedness in general, and in particular for their cruelty to the children of Israel, and for buying and selling them like cattle in the markets (Joel 3:5, etc.; Amos 1:9). And the Psalmist reckons them among the most inveterate and implacable enemies of the Jewish name and nation (Ps. 83:6, 7). *Ep. Norton*.

**I shall be replenished.** As Tyre was

a noted market for all sorts of trade, so when Jerusalem was taken and sacked, the spoil of the city was carried thither for sale; and probably several of the inhabitants, being made captives, were sold there for slaves—a traffic the Tyrians dealt in very much (chap. 27:13). This interpretation may be confirmed by comparing it with Joel 3:4, 5, 6, where the prophet upbraids the Tyrians for making merchandise both of the persons and substance of the Jews, when they came into their hands. To the same purpose we read (1 Mac. 3:41) that when Lysias came with great forces to subdue the Jews, the merchants of the country took silver and gold and came into the camp to buy the children of Israel for slaves. *W. Louth.*

**3-6.** God would bring up many nations against her, even as the great sea heaves up its mighty waves against the bulwarks that feeble men rear. This maritime figure is entirely in place in a prophecy against Tyre. The island city was built on the top of a huge rock. When the city became utterly desolate, and all its vast walls, forts, and structures were demolished, the surface of this rock was laid bare, and became precisely a place for fishermen to spread and dry their nets. This prophecy has long since been literally fulfilled. Her great wealth, accumulated during ages of lucrative commerce, became a spoil to the nations. *H. C.*

**4, 5, 12.** The prophecies of Ezekiel seem on the spot like histories of Tyre. Its capture by Alexander the Great exhausted to the letter these inspired predictions. The first fulfilment may have been complete centuries ago. Tyre may have arisen again and again from her ruins, and may rise a fifth time. The Phœnician power which Isaiah and Ezekiel denounced has long since perished utterly; and though the later Tyres have had no connection save a geographical one, yet their successive doom, and the wretched present, at least add force and power to the scriptural warning. *Tristram.*

**5.** *It shall be a place for the spreading of nets.* Passing by Tyre for curiosity only, I came to be a mournful witness of the truth of that prophecy "that Tyre, the queen of nations, should be a rock for fishers to dry their nets on;" two wretched fishermen with miserable nets had just given over their occupation. *Bruce.*—On the north side of Tyre there is an old Turkish ungarrisoned castle; besides which you see nothing here but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, etc., there being not so much as one entire house left. Its present inhabitants are only a few wretches harboring

themselves in the vaults, and subsisting themselves chiefly upon fishing, who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled His word concerning Tyre. *Mandrell.*—The Jesuit Hadrianus Parvillerias resided ten years in Syria; and Huetius heard him say that when he approached the ruins of Tyre and beheld the rocks stretched forth to the sea, and the great stones scattered up and down on the shore, made clean and smooth by the sun, waves and winds, and useful only for the drying of fishermen's nets, many of which happened at the time to be spread on them, it brought to his memory this prophecy. *Bp. Newton.*

**7-12.** This passage predicts the celebrated siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, which occurred not long after. Josephus refers to it in two distinct passages (*Ant.* 10:11:1, and against Apion 1:21); in the former, citing Philostratus as saying that "this king besieged Tyre thirteen years while Ethbaal reigned at Tyre;" and in the latter, quoting in general from the records of the Phœnicians to the same effect. Precisely how this siege of Tyre terminated, whether with its absolute subjugation, or by capitulation, or by the withdrawal of the besiegers, is still in dispute among antiquarians. The testimony of Jerome, in his commentary on Ezek. 29:8, is quite explicit to the point that Nebuchadnezzar did capture the city, but found nothing of any account within it, because the Tyrians had previously removed everything valuable in their ships. *H. C.*

**7-18.** It is evident, from the entire character of the description, that the city attacked is—mainly, at any rate—not the island Tyre, but the ancient city upon the continent, Palætyrus, as the Greeks called it, which occupied a position directly opposite to the island, upon the sea-shore. Nebuchadnezzar, as he is correctly named, fully established in his empire, not merely a "king of Babylon," but a "king of kings," comes with such an army as Polyhistor described him as bringing against Judea, to attack the Phœnician town. He brings "horses and chariots, and horsemen and companies, and much people." He proceeds to invest the city after the fashion commonly adopted by the Assyrian monarchs, and inherited from them by the Babylonians. Having constructed a movable fort or tower, such as we see in the Assyrian bas-reliefs, he brings it against the walls, while at the same time he "raises a mound" against them, from which to work his engines and shoot his arrows with the

better effect. His men "lift up the buckler," as the Assyrians do while they mine the walls or fire the gates; while his "engines" ply their strokes, and his bravest soldiers, "with axes," or rather "swords"—often used by the Assyrians for the purpose—seek to "break down the towers." His efforts are successful, and a breach is made; the horsemen and chariots, as well as the footmen, enter the town; there is the usual carnage and plundering that accompany the storming of a stronghold; and, finally, there is a destruction or dismantling of the place, more or less complete.

It is remarkable that the siege and capture of the island city obtain no distinct mention. Some have supposed that it was not taken; but this is scarcely compatible with the words of the "Lament for Tyre," or with the "isles shaking at the sound of her fall" (verses 15, 18). Probably the two cities, island and inland, were so bound together that the conquest of the one involved the surrender of the other. G. R.

**13, 14.** Her "songs" and "harps" indicate that music was in a somewhat advanced stage of cultivation. "Thou shalt be built no more"—i.e., with like magnificence and strength. The city rose again—to be besieged more than two centuries later by Alexander—after which it never regained its independence nor its former magnificence. H. C.

**14.** *Be built no more.* This is true of Old Tyre; it has been built no more. New Tyre, taken by Alexander, was built upon an island. Nebuchadnezzar quite destroyed Old Tyre, and the ruins were made use of by Alexander to effect the destruction of New Tyre. The prophecy was also fulfilled upon New Tyre, whose inhabitants were quite destroyed by Alexander when he took the city, and afterward the city itself became desolate. W. Louth.

**15-18.** The term "*isles*," as usual, stands for all maritime countries reached by sea, and here has special reference to Carthage, Tartessus, and all those regions of Northern Africa and Southern Europe which had sustained close commercial relations with Tyre. At the sound of her fall those isles would shake; their princes would come down from their thrones, lay off their robes, and put on trembling, and sit on the ground as men brought down, despite of all their honor, to their mother dust! H. C.

**16, 17.** *Then all the princes of the sea, etc.* All the princes and rich merchants of Sidon, Carthage and other maritime cities that maintained a trade with Tyre, and got great wealth by that means; they whose "merchants are

princes," as Isaiah speaks of the merchants of Tyre (chap. 23: 8); they shall express a deep sense and concern for her misfortunes. (Cf. chaps. 27: 30-32; 32: 10.) W. Louth.—The commerce of Tyre extended from Abyssinia and Arabia on the south, to Armenia and Georgia on the north, and from the frontiers of India to the utmost islands of Greece, and, indeed, far beyond both, came to this little spot—the caravans by land and the ships by sea—a commerce rarely exceeded in extent and variety—a concentration of wealth and luxury which few cities of any age or country could boast. No doubt her merchants were princes, and her traffickers the honorable men of the earth. How impressive the change! Well might the isles shake at the sound of her fall. Her present utter prostration and poverty are abundantly sufficient to meet the demands of prophecy, even without reference to continental Tyre, which has been literally wiped off the map of the earth. She has sunk down to the dust beneath the heavy "burden" of prophecy; nor can she ever recover her ancient glory without a succession of mighty physical, moral and political miracles, such as the world has never seen, and which we have no reason to expect.

The Hebrew historians, prophets and poets constantly allude to her power, wealth, luxury and vices, and Ezekiel seems to tax the entire geography of the known world to set forth the extent of her commerce and the multitude of her riches. It would take a volume to trace the varied fortunes of Tyre through Egyptian, Chaldean, Macedonian, Roman, Saracenic, Frank and Turkish dynasties, down to the present wretched representative of so much greatness and glory. With but few exceptions, it is now a cluster of miserable huts, inhabited by about thirty-five hundred impoverished Metawelies and Arab Christians, destitute alike of education, of arts, and of enterprise, carrying on with Egypt a small trade in tobacco from the neighboring hills, and of lava mill-stones from the Hauran. This is a sorry schedule for the name of Tyre, but it is about about all she can exhibit. W. M. T.

**19-21.** The idea is that Tyre goes down to the under-world, to live no more among the nations of this fair earth, while the Lord will raise up Judah and make her again the glory of all lands. This conception of the grave or pit as an under-world, where the ancient dead have their long abode, is applied here beautifully to cities and kingdoms which go down to ruin to rise no more. Over against this doom of

Tyre, thus perished and gone, never to rise in her glory again, the Lord promises to make the land of His own people Israel once more the glory of the earth. II. C.

**20.** Compare Isa. 14 : 9, where Babylon, represented by her king, is depicted as going down to join in Hades the departed monarchs of old time. It is remarkable that the image which is used by Isaiah and Jeremiah of Babylon is by Ezekiel applied to Tyre, as if to show that Tyre and Babylon alike represent the world-power, and so in the Apocalypse Babylon is the kingdom of Antichrist. Here the prophet unites the figure with that of a desolate and uninhabited city.

*I shall set glory in the land of the living.* The land of the living is the land of the true God, as opposed to the land of the dead, to which is gathered the glory of the world. Here then, together with the utter ruin of Tyre, rises the vision of renewed glory to Jerusalem. The coming Messiah is thus prophetically pointed out. The overthrow of God's enemies shall be accompanied by the establishment of His true kingdom.

**Chap. 27.** The dirge of Tyre. Tyre is compared to a fair vessel, to whose equipment the various nations of the world contribute their stores, launching forth in majesty, to be wrecked and to perish. The nations enumerated point out Tyre as the centre of commerce between the eastern and western world. This position, occupied for a short time by Jerusalem, was long maintained by Tyre, till, after successive sieges, the erection of Alexandria to supplant her in this traffic completed the ruin which war had begun. This dirge is grounded upon the dirge of Babylon (Isa. 14 : 3-21); the connection shows that in each case the city named represents the world-power antagonistic to God. B. C.

This remarkable chapter is a sort of inventory of the wealth, greatness and glory of ancient Tyre, showing the sources whence she drew her materials and men for the commerce and the carrying trade of the world. No ancient historian has ever approximated toward the statement so full and complete as this of the business relations which existed in that age among the nations of the world. Here is Tyre, the commercial centre of the world, reaching forth her arms in every direction to make every kind contribute its best products in men, in wisdom, martial prowess, nautical skill, and in every sort of material to stock her markets, or to minister to her facilities for transportation. It is a wonderful description; yet it stands

here, not to give us the barren facts of so much commerce and so much splendor in the arts, but to show how much human greatness and glory went down in one fearful fall when the Almighty arose in His wrath to smite her bulwarks and sink all her glory in the depths of ruin. By how much the more sublime the height of her glory, by so much the more astounding was the crash of her fall! The revelator John had his eye on this chapter in his magnificent description of the fall of Babylon the Great (Rev. 18). II. C.

Tyre itself, Tzôr of the Hebrew, Sur of the modern Arabs, signifying "rock," is first mentioned in Scripture among the cities of the district of Asher, "the strong city Tyre," but does not occur again till the time of David. It was up to this period probably the dependent, as it was certainly the daughter city of Zidon. It was originally a rocky islet, separated from the main-land, on which also stood another city, called Paketyrus, or Old Tyre. The main city continued thus insular until united to the main-land by a mole, by Alexander the Great.

Tyre scarcely occurs again in Bible history as distinct from Zidon, till the times of the later prophets, when the relations of the kingdoms had much changed (Joel 3 : Amos 1), when we find Tyre denounced for its cruel trade in Hebrew captives to the neighboring nations and to the Greeks. After the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel by Assyria, Shalmaneser vainly attempted the siege of Tyre, then the chief city of Phœnicia, and blockaded it for five years. This is probably referred to by Isaiah (chap. 23). It soon recovered its prosperity, until Nebuchadnezzar again laid siege to it. It resisted his arms for the long space of thirteen years, during which it was blockaded by land. As Ezekiel says (29 : 18), "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus." Yet it does not clearly appear that he actually stormed it. The passage in Ezekiel (29 : 18-20) would seem rather to imply the contrary. It seems probable that without an actual capitulation Tyre submitted to the supremacy of Babylon, and thus purchased her commercial freedom.

The 27th chapter of Ezekiel presents a wonderful picture of the vast trade, manufactures and commercial connection of Tyre, embracing every quarter of the then known world, and every commodity which wealth and luxury could command. Her trade extended from Persia, and perhaps India, to Spain; her metecenaries and mechanics were drawn alike from the

three continents. Her merchandise embraced all the then known metals: gold from India; silver, iron, lead and tin from Spain; copper from Cyprus; wheat and cereals, honey, oil and balm from Palestine; wools from Arabia; ivory and ebony from the far East; linen fabrics from Egypt; dyes from Greece; wines from Syria, and every kind of jewelry from Damascus.

Tyre submitted on easy terms to the Persian superiority, and assisted in building the second Temple, as it had the first (Ezra 3:7). After a practical independence of two hundred years, Tyre alone of the Phœnician cities refused submission to the third Greek empire, and cost Alexander the Great a siege of seven months before he took it, which he only accomplished by making a causeway from the main-land. He sold thirty thousand of the free women and children as slaves, and slaughtered its defenders.

The Romans gave Tyre municipal privileges, and it continued to flourish, and escaped destruction at the hands of the Mohammedan invaders on condition of its submission to the conquerors. It was taken by the Crusaders in A.D. 1124, and William of Tyre, the celebrated historian and a Frenchman, became its bishop. In A.D. 1291 it surrendered to the Saracens, and has ever since continued to decline. A century ago it had fallen so low that it contained but about ten fishermen, its only inhabitants; but has lately risen to a comparatively flourishing town of about four thousand inhabitants.

At present a desolate ridge of sand connects Tyre with the broad plain beyond, heaped by the sea-drift upon the causeway which Alexander made to connect the island with the main land. Though Tyre has risen again within a century, yet the filth and squalor of the little towns are unsurpassed in Syria. Scanty bazaars, about five feet wide, wattled over at intervals with decayed sticks and palm leaves; dilapidated, windowless hovels, raised among huge fragments of polished granite and porphyry columns prostrate in rubbish—such is modern Tyre. For half a mile the sea flows to the depth of a foot or two over flat rocks, covered by one mass of broken columns, leaning or prostrate, in bewildering confusion, as if pitched pell mell into the water. This is insular Tyre, "the waters have covered her." "She is a place for fishermen to spread their nets on." The columns, blackened by the salt water, appear to have been smooth, and not fluted, but they are now fretted and perforated by ages of exposure to storm and tempest.

They are still quite sufficient to attest the grandeur of the later or Roman Tyre, to which, doubtless, they belong. *Tristram.*

3. "At the entry of the sea." Tyre was the commercial port for the whole eastern shore of the Mediterranean. This vast body of water was practically in those times what its name indicates, the *midland sea* of the nations, begirt on every side with the civilization, the industry, and the wealth of the known world. The word rendered "merchant" implies that she had the carrying trade of the world, transporting the commodities of the great East to the West, and of the great West to the East. H. C.

Its geographic position of necessity made it the chief point of connection, commercially and otherwise, between the Eastern and the Western world. That position also constrained it to become a manufacturing and maritime rather than an agricultural State. Under such conditions it rose from century to century to a higher point of culture, wealth and influence than it was possible for either the nomadic peoples of Central Asia or the secluded States of Southern Europe to attain. Its commerce far surpassed that of any contemporaneous power, extending to India on the east, and to Spain, and possibly Gaul and Britain, on the west. Its manufactures of glass, of purple cloths, and other articles both useful and elegant, commanded the patronage of the known world. It became the prolific mother of numerous colonies in the East, in Cyprus and Sicily, and along both the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean as far as Carthage and Tarsish. In literature, in art, and other kindred elements of a high civilization, it attained like eminence, and gained for itself a commanding influence among the peoples and nations of that early day. *E. D. Morris.*

10, 11. The prophet here leaves the allegory of the ship to describe the military resources of the Tyrians. We note that their armies were composed of mercenary soldiers, as was the case with Carthage, and is common with all merchant States, with whom money is more plentiful than men.

10. *Persia* (Heb. *Pārus*). The name of this people does not occur in the more ancient books of the Old Testament. Their place is occupied by the Elamites; but in the books of the Exile and after the Exile it is frequent (Ezek. 38:5; 2 Chron. 36:20, 22; Ezra 4:5; 6:14; Esther 1:3, etc.). This exactly corresponds with the record of history. It was just at the time that Ezekiel wrote that the rude and warlike people of Persia were rising into notice, soon about to



seize, under Cyrus, the empire of the Asiatic world. The name *Parsha* occurs on the inscription of Behistan. B. C.

She hired her soldiers from Persia in the far East; and from Lud and Phut, countries of Northern Africa, lying west of Egypt, descendants of Ham. Shields and helmets were hung up when not in immediate use. These men were perhaps her standing army on garrison duty for home defence. They heightened her splendor ("comeliness"). In verse 11, "Gam-madin" is a common (not a proper) noun, meaning (by etymology) *the brave warriors* who cut down the enemy as the woodman fells trees.

**12-16.** "Tarshish," Tartessus in Spain, supplied largely the minerals most used in the arts. So ancient history testifies. The last clause means: they replenished thy markets with these commodities. "Javan," strictly ancient Ionia; "Tubal and Meshech," also countries of Asia Minor, sold slaves in her market. "Togarmah" was a region yet farther north, supposed to be Armenia, peopled with descendants of Gomer through Torgom. They abounded in horses. Dedan on the Persian Gulf, far in the south, is supposed to have been an ancient Phœnician colony. The maritime places adjacent are referred to here as the "many isles" which supplied merchandise to the hand of Tyre. Ivory and ebony were their products.

**17, 18.** Judah and Israel supplied the staple articles of food. The same view as to the nature of the trade between Tyre and Israel appears in the negotiations between Hiram and Solomon (1 K. 5:9-11). Hiram said, "Thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household." "Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food for his household and twenty measures of pure oil year by year." Damascus was even then celebrated for her manufactures. Her skill in fine cloths and especially in silks has given the term "*dumasks*" an enduring place in human language.

**21, 22.** That herds and flocks were the commodities of Arabia and Kedar is in harmony with all antiquity. Isaiah sang of "the flocks of Kedar" (chap. 60:7), and in the same connection, of "the gold and incense of Sheba." H. C.

**25.** The metaphor of the ship is here resumed. The break should be at the 25th, not at the 26th verse. The 25th verse represents the good ship Tyre, sailing in all her glory, in order to introduce by way of contrast her wreck and ruin. B. C.

**26, 27.** Here the discourse turns from her

glory and greatness to her fall. It was as if her rowers had brought her into great waters, to be sunk there with all her wealth by the mighty east winds of that inland sea. Then by how much the greater her freight of wealth, merchandise, mariners, mercenary soldiers, men of all business and population of every sort; by so much the more terrible the fearful fall that would engulf her in the mighty deep to rise no more! H. C.

**29.** As Tyre is figured by a large vessel, so are the subject States by smaller boats which accompany the great ship. These, terrified by the storm, approach the land, and their crews disembark to gaze in consternation on the wreck of their mistress. We are not to suppose that the sailors leave the ship which represents Tyre itself. That ship is hopelessly swallowed up, crew and all, in the midst of the sea. The small crafts escape to shore. *Hilferrick*.

**28-32.** This is the mourning and the wailing over her fall. The prophet groups together all the usual Oriental symbols and modes of expressing the most intense grief. The last clause of verse 32 is specially expressive, where instead of, "like the destroyed," etc., I would read, "*as one hushed to dead silence* in the midst of the sea," in contrast with the hum and noise of her busy commerce and the myriad sounds of a great city of trade. H. C.

**35.** The dirge of the neighbors ends with verse 34; but the news of Tyre's ruin shall reach farther, to distant isles, to merchant cities who trade with her. These, in their selfish love of gain, shall rejoice over her who was once paramount over them, hissing out against her not lamentations, like her neighbors, but curses and scorn. *Thou shalt be a terror, and shalt never be any more.* Nearly the same words which the prophet spoke (26:24) are now put in the mouth of exulting foes. B. C.

**33-36.** Once so great, enriching kings from thy stores of wealth; now broken, impoverished; the isles astonished at thy fall; the kings of the earth appalled before such retribution, and the merchants of the earth, once joyous in thy traffic, now hissing contemptuously over thy ruin—what a scene is this! How fraught with impressive lessons on the frailty of human wealth and grandeur, and the folly of human pride! No securities are too substantial to be utterly broken down. No guarantee for the permanence of wealth and glory will stand when God arises to call men to their moral account! H. C.

No one can visit Tyre without being reminded at every step of the prophecies uttered

against the city by the Hebrew prophets, and especially by Ezekiel—her walls are "broken down;" her "pleasant houses" destroyed; her stones and timber lay "in the midst of the water;" it is a place "for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea;" and we may well exclaim with Ezekiel, "What city is like Tyre, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?" or, "How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city which wast strong in the sea?" *Wilson*.

There yet remains one solitary specimen of Tyre's great sea wall, that mighty bulwark which no enemy could overthrow. At the extreme northern end of the island, a stone nearly seventeen feet long and six and a half thick rests just where Tyrian architects placed it thousands of years ago. As in every case that I have examined, the foundation laid for these gigantic blocks is made with stone comparatively small. Should any one ask where are the stones of ancient Tyre—where, at least, the remains of those lofty towers and triple walls which so excited the wonder and admiration of the Crusaders only some seven centuries ago, there is a satisfactory reply. They are found in this depth of ruins, spread over the island, and over the causeway of Alexander. They are found in her choked up harbor, and at the bottom of her sea. They are at Acre, and Joppa, and Beirût, and in the *rubbish* of all those cities. In fact, the only wonder is that so much still remains to reveal and confirm the ancient greatness of this Phœnician capital. *W. M. Thomson*.

The blow which levelled insular Tyre was to terminate its maritime glory forever. What uninspired writer could have foreseen such a consequence? It had rallied once, and why not rally again? No! The commerce of the whole world must be changed; and a new port and mart be founded in a land the least accessible to strangers—the most averse to maritime affairs, and which must first be conquered, in order to complete the maritime ruin of Tyre. But all this was done. The erection of the port and city of Alexandria did, in fact, accomplish it; and henceforth the supremacy of Tyre disappeared. Pliny, in describing it a few centuries later, after extolling the ancient renown, observes: "But at this day all the glory and reputation thereof standeth upon the dye of purple and crimson colors." Tyre continued still to be a frequented port; but its commerce was ever after limited and provincial. *Belsham*.

Since first the dominion of men was asserted

over the ocean, three thrones, of mark beyond all others, have been set up on its sands: the thrones of Tyre, Venice and England. Of Tyre, the first of these great powers, only the memory remains; of the second, the ruin; the third, which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less-pitied destruction. The exaltation, the sin, and the punishment of Tyre have been recorded for us in perhaps the most touching words ever uttered by the prophets of Israel against the cities of the stranger. But we read them as a lovely song, and close our ears to the sternness of their warning; for the very depth of the fall of Tyre has blinded us to its reality, and we forget, as we watch the bleaching of the rocks between the sunshine and the sea, that they were once "as in Eden, the garden of God." *Ruskin*.

**Chap. 28.** In this chapter judgments on Tyre continue through verses 1-19; then on Zidon through verses 20-26. The judgments against Tyre are specially directed to "the prince of Tyrus" (verse 2), and to "the king" (verse 12) for his great pride. The king is probably a representative man; first, the embodiment of the nation's pride; then the symbol of her doom. *H. C.*

**2.** *I sit in the seat of God.* The words are put in the mouth of the speaker to denote his arrogant pride, but the situation of the island-city, full of luxury and beauty, in the midst of the blue water of the Mediterranean, gives force to the expression. So there is a fitness in describing the lot of Tyre as having been in *Eden, the garden of God*, though the words are mainly chosen to denote the glory of man in his primal innocence. *B. C.*

**3.** *Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel.* In thy own conceit. *Ep. Hall*.—The fame of Daniel's wisdom was quickly spread over Chaldea upon his being advanced to several posts of honor and dignity by Nebuchadnezzar. (See Dan. 2: 48.) The Phœnicians, of whom the Tyrians were a colony, valued themselves for their wisdom and ingenuity, as being the inventors of navigation, of letters and sciences. (Cf. Zech. 9: 2.) *W. Loeth*.

**6-8.** These "strangers," "the terrible of the nations," are primarily the Chaldeans, whose fearful onslaught and siege of thirteen years' duration brought death to multitudes of her sons and daughters, and ruin over her fair city. "Against the beauty of thy wisdom" is beauty in the arts, such as manifests peculiar skill, "wisdom." In verse 8 the sense is, Thou Tyre, although in the midst of the seas,

and therefore supposing thyself safe, shalt yet die the death of those who are pierced through with the sword. II. C.

**11-19.** The dirge of the prince of Tyre, answering to the dirge of the State. A strong vein of irony runs throughout the passage, but the main purpose is to depict all the glory, real or assumed, of the *prince of Tyrus*, in order to show how deplorable should be his ruin. B. C.

**13.** "Eden, the garden of God," man's primeval paradise, fills the conception of beauty. Such in her own esteem was the state of Tyre when she sat proudly, enriched with the wealth of the nations and shining in their concentrated splendor. This accumulation of terms for gems and precious stones shows at least that a great variety of them were well known and much valued as objects of enduring beauty. The general idea is, Thou wast ordained to this wealth and splendor from the day when thou wast founded as a city and nation. Tyre had always been a great mart of commerce and a home for its wealth and glory.

**15.** Up and down amid these the king of Tyre had walked. In all his ways this monarch had enjoyed the perfection of earthly glory and splendor from the very foundation of the city and kingdom until iniquity was found in him and the hand of the Almighty came down upon him in righteous judgment.

**16, 17.** The language which describes her doom is transferred from the account of her previous splendor. Once a cherub sitting in glory in the holy mount of God amid gems sparkling with lustre; now the Lord will cast her as a profane thing down from His own holy mount and destroy her. Beauty and wisdom had been her snare, and now became her curse.

**19.** "And never shalt thou be any more." The full measure of this doom did not come with the siege by Nebuchadnezzar, for Tyre recovered in some degree from this first blow. Another blow fell on her from the hand of Alexander, two hundred and fifty years later. Saracen and Turk have finished the work of her destruction. She has come at last to be only a naked rock on which fishermen dry their nets, as the prophet said.

**20-24.** Zidon, the subject of this prophecy, lying but twenty miles north of Tyre; herself, like Tyre, situated on the Mediterranean, yet never, like Tyre, distinguished for trade, but rather for skill in manufactures, was the more ancient, appearing in Bible history, Gen. 10: 15, 19; Josh. 11: 8; 19: 28—in these two latter cases as "Great Zidon." The references to

it in Judges 1: 31 and 18: 28 indicate its military strength. This prophecy against Zidon is brief; does not specify her sins particularly, but declares that God will be glorified and sanctified in His judgments upon her. II. C.

**21.** *Zidon.* Prophecy against Zidon: Joel 3: 4. Zidon was more ancient than Tyre, and was the original metropolis of Phœnicia; it is mentioned in Gen. 10: 19, where the name of Tyre does not occur, but in the times of Phœnician greatness it ever played a subordinate part. Only once (Judges 10: 12) do we find the Zidonians in conflict with Israel. The evil which they did was the seducing them to idolatry, as in the case of Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. This is implied in verse 24, referring, no doubt, to Num. 33: 55 and Josh. 23: 13. The capture of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar increased the importance of Zidon, which was a wealthy and flourishing town when Artaxerxes Ochus destroyed it. It has rallied from time to time, but has never attained to any great consequence, but its ruin has not been so complete as that of Tyre. The terms of this prophecy against Zidon differ widely from those in which Tyre is denounced. "The modern Saïda must be considered not so much a direct successor of the ancient Zidon as a small group of fortified houses which especially since the time of the Crusades has collected round the port of the old town. It is made up of ancient debris which are scarcely to be recognized, with the exception of the never-ending shafts of columns built into the walls, the gigantic blocks in the old port, and the cuttings in the rocks. Saïda, like Sour, has preserved above ground no other vestige of its Phœnician history. Until the discovery of the great Necropolis situated around Mughâret Abloun, in 1855, it might have been said that the ancient Zidon, the mother in Canaan, had totally disappeared" ("Mission de Phénicie," pp. 361, 362).

**25, 26.** The contrast of the future of Israel with that of the surrounding nations. As we have seen that the prophecies against the heathen reached, not merely to the particular nations, but to the world-power which they represented, as the same predictions are directed against Tyre by Ezekiel, against Babylon by Isaiah, and against the Apocalyptic Babylon by St. John; so this prophecy reaches far beyond a mere temporal restoration. It points to times of more permanent security, when from all nations and kingdoms the Church of Christ, the Israel of God, shall be gathered in, when the power of the world shall be forever

broken, and the kingdom of Christ shall be established forever. B. C.

**25.** *When I shall have gathered the house of Israel.* In their long captivity, God had been preparing the land for them so as to make it a *safe dwelling*; and hence He executed judgments on all the heathen nations round about by means of the Chaldeans. Thus Tyre and Sidon were destroyed, as were the Ammonites and others who had been the inveterate enemies of the Jews. Judgment first began at His own house, then proceeded to the heathen nations; and when they were brought down, then He visited and redeemed His people. Thus God's ways are proved to be all equal; partialities and caprices belong not to Him. A. C.

**25, 26.** So true is it that God stands with and for His people, and will surely prove Himself their Redeemer and Saviour. The world shall yet know His power to save His trusting children, befriend His own cause, and fill all the earth with His glory. H. C.

One who reads the graphic records in the three chapters of Ezekiel (26-28) referring to the history of Tyre must be blinded in mind or in heart if he does not discern in them the presence of a Divine mind which foresees all the future, and of a Divine will which is able to bring every prediction to a sure and distinct and sublime fulfilment. . . . Can any thoughtful student of the remarkable series of predictions respecting Tyre found in the Bible, and of its equally remarkable history, have any serious doubt as to either the reality or the importance of prophecy as a supernatural element in Scripture? In this case both the fact and the function of prophecy stand out before us with peculiar clearness. It cannot be that these predictions are fraudulent interpretations inserted in Scripture in order to deceive men into belief in a fraudulent Book, pretending to be from God, but written by human hands alone. Nor can it be said that these were merely the acute generalizations of wise men familiar with the course of human affairs, and competent to guess at what might happen under certain specified conditions. The only possible hypothesis in the case is that there was a mind which, before Amos and Isaiah and Ezekiel were born, distinctly saw the entire future of Tyre, which looked with undimmed vision down through the twenty-five centuries that have intervened since they lived and wrote, and which in some true sense not only foresaw the whole, but has brought it to pass. But that foreseeing and

determining mind is God, the God who by the twofold evidence of miracle and prophecy confirms His Word and proves Himself to be the providential Sovereign and Lord of mankind. We see in the verifications of history the proof that the predictions are genuine; and in the verified predictions we see conclusive evidence that there is such a God, and that all His declarations are "yea" and "amen." And so, in the crushed and perished city by the sea, standing in silent desolation through the centuries, we find a mute yet solemn witness to the truth that God rules in history, and by that sovereign rule has set to His seal that His revelation is infinitely worthy of all human acceptance.

It is also obvious that the desolated Tyre is divinely designed to be not only a corroboration of the Bible, but also a solemn lesson to the world respecting the sinfulness of sin and the certainty of its final and terrible doom. History here confirms prophecy, and both join their voices in testifying to the moral government of God in the world. So long as history continues to paint on its canvas the awful picture which the pen of Ezekiel first portrayed, it will be known and realized that a Divine power that works for righteousness is always present among men, rebuking and overthrowing evil as well as confirming good. And we may well meditate in this connection on the words with which Bishop Newton closes his dissertation on Tyre as an illustration of the nature and scope of prophecy:

"Such hath been the fate of this city, once the most famous in the world for trade and commerce. But trade is a fluctuating thing. It passed from Tyre to Alexandria; from Alexandria to Venice; from Venice to Antwerp; from Antwerp to Amsterdam and London. All nations, almost, are wisely applying themselves to trade; and it behooves those who are in possession of it to take the greatest care that they do not lose it. It is a plant of tender growth, and requires sun, and soil, and fine seasons to make it thrive and flourish. . . . Liberty is a friend to that, as that is a friend to liberty. But the greatest enemy to both is licentiousness, which tramples upon all law and lawful authority, encourages riots and tumults, promotes drunkenness and debauchery, sticks at nothing to supply its extravagance, practises every art of illicit gain, ruins credit, ruins trade, and will in the end ruin liberty itself. Neither kingdoms nor commonwealths, neither public companies nor private persons can long carry on a beneficial, flourishing trade without virtue, and what virtue teacheth—sobriety, in-

dustry, frugality, modesty, honesty, punctuality, humanity, charity, the love of our country and the fear of God. The prophets inform us how the Tyrians lost it; and the like causes will always produce the like effects." *E. D. Morris.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XXIX., XXX., XXXI., XXXII.

- 29 : 1** In the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, in the twelfth *day* of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt : speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. And I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales ; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, with all the fish of thy rivers which stick unto thy scales. And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers : thou shalt fall upon the open field ; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered : I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the earth and to the fowls of the heaven. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and didst rend all their shoulders ; and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand. Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and will cut off from thee man and beast. And the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste ; and they shall know that I am the Lord : because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. Therefore behold, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from the tower of Seveneh even unto the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be a desolation forty years : and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. For thus saith the Lord God : At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the peoples whither they were scattered : and I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their birth ; and they shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms ; neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations : and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing iniquity to remembrance, when they turn to look after them : and they shall know that I am the Lord God.
- 17** And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre : every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled : yet had he no wages, nor his army, from Tyre, for the service that he had served against it : therefore thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon ; and he shall carry off her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey ; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt as his recompence for which he served, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.
- 21** In that day will I cause an horn to bud forth unto the house of Israel, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.
- 30 : 1, 2** The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord God : Howl ye, Woe worth the day ! For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a day of clouds ; it shall be the time of the heathen. And a sword shall come upon Egypt, and anguish shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt ; and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. Ethiopia, and Put, and Lud, and all the mingled people, and Cub, and the children of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword.
- 6** Thus saith the Lord : They also that uphold Egypt shall fall, and the pride of her power shall come down ; from the tower of Seveneh shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and all her helpers are destroyed. In that day shall messengers go forth from before me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid ; and there shall be anguish upon them, as in the day of Egypt : for, lo, it cometh.
- 10** Thus saith the Lord God : I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease, by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations,

shall be brought in to destroy the land ; and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. And I will make the rivers dry, and will sell the land into the hand of evil men ; and I will make the land desolate, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers : I the LORD have spoken it.

Thus saith the Lord God : I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause the images to cease from Noph ; and there shall be no more a prince out of the land of Egypt ; and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set a fire in Zoan, and will execute judgements in No. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strong hold of Egypt ; and I will cut off the multitude of No. And I will set a fire in Egypt ; Sin shall be in great anguish, and No shall be broken up : and Noph shall have adversaries in the day-time. The young men of Aven and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword ; and these cities shall go into captivity. At Tahaphnehes also the day shall withdraw itself, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt, and the pride of her power shall cease in her : as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. Thus will I execute judgements in Egypt : and they shall know that I am the LORD.

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt ; and lo, it hath not been bound up to apply healing medicines, to put a roller to bind it, that it be strong to hold the sword. Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken ; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand : but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. And I will hold up the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down ; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries ; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude : Whom art thou like in thy greatness ? Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature ; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters nourished him, the deep made him to grow : her rivers ran round about her plantation ; and she sent out her channels unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his stature was exalted above all the trees of the field ; and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long by reason of many waters, when he shot them forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches : for his root was by many waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him : the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the plane trees were not as his branches ; nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty. I made him fair by the multitude of his branches : so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

Therefore thus said the Lord God : Because thou art exalted in stature, and he hath set his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height ; I will even deliver him into the hand of the mighty one of the nations ; he shall surely deal with him : I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him : upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the watercourses of the land ; and all the peoples of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin all the fowls of the heaven shall dwell, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches : to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves in their stature, neither set their top among the thick boughs, nor that their mighty ones stand up in their height, *even* all that drink water : for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

Thus saith the Lord God : In the day when he went down to hell I caused a mourning : I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the rivers thereof, and the great waters were stayed ; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit : and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain by the sword ; yea, they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the nations.

To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden ? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth : thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation

for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou wast likened unto a young lion of the nations; yet art thou as a dragon in the seas; and thou brakest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and foulest their rivers. Thus saith the Lord God: I will spread out my net over thee with a company of many peoples; and they shall bring thee up in my net. And I will leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to settle upon thee, and I will satisfy the beasts of the whole earth with thee. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimdest, even to the mountains; and the watercourses shall be full of thee. And when I shall extinguish thee, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. I will also vex the hearts of many peoples, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. Yea, I will make many peoples amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall. For thus saith the Lord God: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall; the terrible of the nations are they all; and they shall spoil the pride of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside many waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. Then will I make their waters clear, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate and waste, a land destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament; the daughters of the nations shall lament therewith: for Egypt, and for all her multitude, shall they lament therewith, saith the Lord God.

It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth *day* of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her away and all her multitudes. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie still, even the uncircumcised, slain by the sword. Asshur is there and all her company; his graves are round about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword: whose graves are set in the uttermost parts of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. There is Elam and all her multitude round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living, and have borne their shame with them that go down to the pit. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude; her graves are round about her: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for their terror was caused in the land of the living, and they have borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude; her graves are round about her: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for they caused their terror in the land of the living. And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war, and have laid their swords under their heads, and their iniquities are upon their bones; for they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. But thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain by the sword. There is Edom, her kings and all her princes, which in their might are laid with them that are slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; in the terror which they caused by their might they are ashamed; and they lie uncircumcised with them that are slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude: even Pharaoh and all his army, slain by the sword, saith the Lord God. For I have put his terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that are slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 29.** With this chapter commences a series of prophecies against Egypt, filling four chapters. The first begins with the date of "the tenth year, tenth month," etc., one month and eighteen days earlier than the date of the preceding prophecy against Tyre. Both fall within the period of the siege of Jerusalem.

The grounds assigned for these judgments upon Pharaoh and Egypt are: 1. That he had been very proud, had practically disowned God, and put himself in His place. 2. That he and his people had been a frail, treacherous staff of help to the Jews—enticing them away from their sworn allegiance to the Chaldeans, to their

own ruin. 3. To reward Nebuchadnezzar for his unpaid service for the Lord against Tyre. II. C.

Ezekiel delivered seven prophecies against Egypt, all of them having more or less reference to Babylon as the power which was to bring ruin upon the country, and two of them mentioning Nebuchadnezzar by name, as the monarch who was to inflict the chastisement (29 : 18, 19 ; 30 : 10). These prophecies are chiefly remarkable as declaring the complete desolation of Egypt, and as fixing a term of years during which her degradation should continue. In chap. 30 we find among the places which are to suffer, Sin or Pelusium, Zoan or Tanis, On or Heliopolis, Noph or Memphis, Tahpanhes or Daphnae, Pibeseth or Bubastis, and No-Ammon or Thebes. In chap. 29 an even wider area is included. There we are told that the land of Egypt was to be "utterly waste and desolate from Migdol to Syene, even unto the border of Ethiopia" (verse 10). The time of Egypt's affliction is fixed at "forty years" (verses 11-13), after which it is to recover, but to be a "base kingdom," "the basest of the kingdoms" (verse 15), no more "exalted above the nations," no more a ruler over nations external to itself. G. R.

Prophecies against Egypt : Isa. 18 ; 19 ; 31 ; Jer. 46 ; Joel 3 : 19. This and the three following chapters uttered (with the exception of chap. 29 : 17 to end) in regular succession predict the downfall of Pharaoh-Hophra and the desolation of Egypt. The form is much the same as in the denunciation of Tyre : (1) A prophecy against Egypt and her allies (29, 30) ; (2) an image of Egypt's greatness and her fall (31) ; and (3) a dirge over Egypt (32). This prophecy (1-16) was delivered some months before the preceding prophecies against Tyre (see 26 : 1), the prophecies against the nations being given, not in their chronological, but in their geographical order, according to their nearness to Jerusalem.

**1. The tenth year.** Jerusalem had been besieged, but not taken. It was about the time that Jeremiah delivered his prophecy against Egypt, when the approach of Pharaoh-Hophra's army caused the Chaldeans for the time to raise the siege (Jer. 37 : 5). This was the solitary instance of Egypt meddling with the affairs of Palestine or Syria after the battle of Carchemish (cf. 2 K. 24 : 7), and it met with a speedy punishment. But for a time there seemed a prospect of help from one like Pharaoh-Hophra, who was evidently disposed to revive the military glory and conquests of Egypt, and regain

the footing in Syria which his ancestor Necho had obtained by the battle of Megiddo. B. C.

**2. Against Pharaoh.** Pharaoh being a common name to all the kings of Egypt, this prince was called Pharaoh-Hophra by Jeremiah (chap. 44 : 30) and Apries by Herodotus. W. Louth.

**3. The great dragon.** The crocodile is alluded to. Bochart remarks that the word Pharaoh signifies a crocodile in the Arabic tongue. Among the ancients it was a symbol of Egypt, and appears so in Roman coins. W. Louth. *Michaelis.*

The "great dragon" is the crocodile—almost a specialty to the Nile. But the crocodile of course represents here Egypt's proud king, who lies basking in the midst of his rivers, as this animal is wont to do. It scarcely needs be said that the Nile *makes* Egypt—is the source of all its fertility ; the channel for all its commerce ; the fountain of all its wealth and subsistence.

**10-12.** The duration of this desolate condition ("forty years") would reach forward into the wane of the Chaldean empire, some years later than the death of Nebuchadnezzar, whose reign began with the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and continued forty-three years. But this subjugation of Egypt, if it followed the fall of Tyre, must have been past the middle point of his reign. II. C.

**14. A base kingdom.** Egypt has sunk to be base among the nations, and to be ruled by foreigners or strangers. That kingdom which was long the most powerful and most honored among the nations of the world has become the helpless victim of successive oppressors. Assyria first rivalled her splendor, and, after lessening her power for a season, humbled her. Three hundred and fifty years before the Christian era, the Persians reduced her to a comparatively degraded condition, and in succession the Macedonians, the Romans, the Saracens, the Mamelukes, and the Turks, have trodden her fertile plains and greatly embarrassed her. W. Fraser.

**15.** What is said here of the "baseness of this kingdom" as contrasted with its former greatness and glory, and also in chap. 30 : 13, "there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt," has its fulfilment in history in the fact that "from the second Persian conquest, more than two thousand years ago, until our own days, not one native ruler has occupied the throne." (See Smith's Bible Dictionary 1 : 512.) When the prophet wrote, Egypt had been a first-class power from the days of Abraham. Since the fulfilment of this prophecy it has been pre-eminently "a base kingdom"—for



long ages past, scarcely known in the world's history as a kingdom at all. What a testimony is this, not to the *truth* of prophecy alone, but to the fearfulness of God's judgments against kings and nations for their proud impiety in disowning their great Creator and King! H. C.

It follows in the next chapter, "there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt" (verse 13). It is now a great deal above two thousand years since this prophecy was first delivered; and what likelihood or appearance was there that the Egyptians should for so many ages bow under a foreign yoke, and never in all that time be able to recover their liberties, and have a prince of their own to reign over them? *Bp. Newton.*

In Egypt the human mind had made its earliest and most auspicious efforts. It was long the general opinion that there the laws of society had been discovered, and the fountains of science opened. Unquestionably that ingenious people were very early distinguished by an ardent spirit of enterprise and a peculiar happiness of invention. The stupendous monuments of art which lie scattered over the banks of the Nile attest the vastness of their designs and the extent of their power. The earliest professors of literature, and the first founders of civil polity in Europe and in the more western provinces of Asia, travelled into Egypt, and there acquired a knowledge of the fundamental principles of science and government. Egypt was possessed likewise of natural advantages, while its uncommon fruitfulness promised to secure the country which it enriched from poverty, baseness, and subjection. Yet after a long course of grandeur, and in contradiction to its natural advantages, Ezekiel pronounced that "the kingdom should be the basest of kingdoms," and that "there should be no more a prince of the land of Egypt." *Richards.*—As is the prophecy, so is the event. For not long afterward Egypt was conquered by the Babylonians; and after the Babylonians, by the Persians; and after the Persians, it became subject to the Macedonians; and after the Macedonians, to the Romans; and after the Romans, to the Saracens; and then to the Mamelukes; and is now a province of the Ottoman Empire. *Bp. Newton.*

Rome made her a province with a certain separateness, under regulations which were peculiar. Under the Mohammedans, whether Arabs, Saracens or Turks, she has still for the most part been secondary, either an actual dependency on some greater State, or at any rate overshadowed by rivals of superior dignity. A

veil hangs over the future; but, so far as human sagacity can forecast, there seems to be little likelihood of any vital change in her position. With peculiar characteristics and an isolated position, she must almost of necessity maintain her separate and distinct individuality, even though she become a dependency on a European power. On the other hand, she has exhibited under recent circumstances no elements of greatness, and remains emphatically "a base kingdom"—if not even "the basest of the kingdoms." There seems to be no elements out of which her revival and reconstitution as a great kingdom could be possible. G. R.

**17-20.** Second prophecy against Egypt. A special prediction of the ruin of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. In putting together the various prophecies which he had delivered against Egypt, the prophet places this out of chronological order, that he may point out that which had not been stated in the foregoing prophecy—viz., that the agent which should strike the first blow on Egypt should be the Chaldean king, Nebuchadnezzar. Compare a similar order in chap. 26: (1) a general prophecy against, (2) a special prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar should effect the ruin. B. C.

**18-20.** The fact of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre having lasted thirteen years throws considerable light on this passage of Ezekiel. The extraordinary length of the siege, in which men grew old and wore themselves out, explains the phrase: "Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled;" and at the same time accounts for the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was considered to have received no wages—i.e., no sufficient wages, for his service, which had been very inadequately repaid by plunder found in the exhausted city. G. R.

**18.** The "hard service" in which "every head was made bald and every shoulder peeled" is accounted for by the manner in which the work was done—viz., by building immense mounds as near the city walls as possible, and high enough to enable the assailants to dismantle or breach the walls, or at least throw their missiles into the city. In the state of the arts at that time, the transportation of stone and earth for building these mounds was done on the heads and shoulders of men—reason enough why "every head should be made bald" and the skin of "every shoulder be peeled" and worn. The Lord speaks of this service as being done *for Himself*—quite in keeping with those passages in which He calls Nebuchadnezzar "My servant." (See Jer. 25: 9; 27: 6; 43: 10.)

The Lord wished the Jews to understand that He had important ends to answer by this great king of Babylon, as was indeed the case. He was God's instrument for a fearful retribution, not on Judea and Jerusalem alone, but on all the nations of Western Asia and upon Egypt. II. C.

*Yet had he no wages, nor his army.* This was literally true; for when the Tyrians saw that the works for carrying on the siege were perfected, and the foundations of the walls were shaken by the battering of the rams, whatsoever precious things in gold, silver, clothes and various kinds of furniture the nobility had, they put them on board their ships, and carried them to the island; so that the city being taken, Nebuchadnezzar found nothing worthy of his labor. *Bp. Newton.*

**20.** *Because they wrought for Me.* The destruction of cities and countries is a work of God's providence, for the effecting of which He makes use of kings and princes as His instruments. Upon this account He calls Nebuchadnezzar His servant (Jer. 25 : 9), because "he wrought for Him," as it is here expressed—that is, executed His judgments upon Tyre and the other cities and countries which God delivered into his hand. *W. Louth.*

In this service God owns that they wrought for Him (verse 20). He set them at work for the humbling of a proud city and its king; though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for Him, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God overrule all to His own glory. For this service he had no wages, nor his army. He was at a vast expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed. The Tyrians sent away by ship their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations from it. He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. God will be behindhand with none for any service they do for Him, but, one way or other, will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on His altar for naught. The service done for Him by worldly men with worldly designs shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which His faithful servants, that have a sincere regard to His will and glory,

would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world. God is in it, paying them for some service or other in which He has made use of them. Verily they have their reward. Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's full reward, for that completed his dominion over the then known world in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he was master of that, he became the head of gold. II.

**21.** Egypt being the antagonist of the people of God, her overthrow inaugurated the triumph of good over evil. The prophet as usual sees the fruit in the germ, the perfect building in the ruin of the edifice cleared away to make room for the new structure. The destruction of heathen powers was leading up to the establishment of Messiah's kingdom.

*I will give thee the opening of the mouth.* When these things should begin to come to pass the prophet's mouth should be opened to declare their meaning, and to make known the end to which all was tending. *B. C.*

**Chap. 30.** In this chapter the one theme is judgment on Egypt, yet there are two messages of diverse date; the first comprising verses 1-19; the second, verses 20-26. The date of the latter is given definitely (in verse 20); probably that the reader might locate it shortly after the defeat of Pharaoh-Hophra, when he approached to aid his Jewish friends by an effort to raise the siege of their city, then in progress by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. Critics are not agreed as to the date of the first portion, some connecting it in time with the message (chap. 29 : 1-16)—viz., in the tenth year and tenth month, etc.; others connecting it with the message (chap. 29 : 17-21)—viz., in the twenty-seventh year.

**1, 5.** Not Egypt alone, but her allies, those powers on the south and west that had been usually associated with her in her great conflicts with the Asiatic powers, now suffer in her fall. Ethiopia on her southern border; Libya and Lydia on her western, are well known as her ancient allies. *II. C.*

**5.** *Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia.* The names in the Hebrew are "Cush, Phut and Lud," who are mentioned together as the Egyptian allies (Jer. 46 : 9). Cush probably signifies Ethiopia here (see chap. 29 : 10) as being joined with Phut and Lud, who were people of Africa. *W. Louth.*

**13-17.** From general statements, the prophet comes to particulars, specifying the several cities that are to feel the weight of this crush-

ing calamity. This is designed and well adapted to strengthen the impression of the fearful facts. The principal cities of Egypt are here enumerated. They are known by other names also—Greek or Egyptian. These are mostly Hebrew. "Noph" is also called Memphis; the great city of Lower Egypt, near the pyramids. "No," or No-Ammun, is Thebes or Diospolis; the great city of Upper Egypt, celebrated for its hundred gates, and even now great in the ruins of its magnificent temples of Luxor, Karnac, etc. "Pathros" is the Egyptian name for Upper Egypt, as Mizraim was sometimes for the lower province. "Zaan" is known in Greek as Tanis, one of the cities of Lower Egypt. "Sin," known by the Greeks as Pelusium, was in the northeastern extremity of Egypt, the point where their Asiatic enemies would naturally strike first. Hence it was fortified so as to become "the strength of Egypt." Its Hebrew name means a *marsh*, and such it was, and perhaps the stronger therefor. "Aven," doubtless the city "On" of Gen. 41:45, 50, from which word it differs only in its vowel points, received this form from the Hebrews in contempt for its idols, *nothings*, or vanities—which is the significance of the word thus pronounced. The Greeks called it Heliopolis, city of the sun, which the Hebrews sometimes translated into Bethshemeth, house of the sun. "Pi-beseth," by the Greeks, Bubastis, was on the lower waters of the Nile. Tehaphnehes, the Daphne of the Greeks, was near Pelusium, and seems to have been in these times the residence of the king and his court. (See Jer. 43:8-13.) Jeremiah has a prophecy (chap. 46) somewhat analogous to this of Ezekiel. H. C.

**13.** Although Egypt temporarily revived under the vigorous rule of the Ptolemies, they were "foreigners," and the predictions held true, "There shall no more be a prince of the land of Egypt;" "The sceptre of Egypt shall depart away." For more than two thousand years the degradation of the kingdom has been painfully visible amid a profusion of nature's benefits. Its comparatively ignominious state, its acknowledged baseness among nations in the midst of which it is still lingering, enfeebled and paralyzed, so distinctly fulfil the bold prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel, that we are justified in demanding the acceptance of supernatural teaching as the explanation of Egypt's varying history. Every fact which travellers describe, and the past and the present historical photographs by which modern inquiries have assisted the student of prophecy, vindicate and

confirm the truth of the predictions. W. *Frederick*.

**20-26.** As said above, this prophecy was probably suggested by the defeat of Pharaoh-Hophra when he attempted to force Nebuchadnezzar to raise the siege of Jerusalem. See Jer. 41:30, "I will give Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies and into the hands of them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar," etc. Suggested by this defeat, it probably followed it closely in time. This was only some three months before the fall of the city of Jerusalem—the latter event being in the eleventh year and fourth month and ninth day (Jer. 52:5, 6), and this, in the eleventh year, first month and seventh day. The breaking of Pharaoh's sword-arm first, hopelessly past cure; then the breaking of both his arms, and the strengthening of the arm of Nebuchadnezzar and putting the sword into it for the execution of God's judgments, are the leading figures of this passage. Some critics interpret the two arms of Egypt's king to be two portions of his territory; others, two royal families; but the general sense, his military power, his means of resisting his great Chaldean enemy, is more natural and probable. The sword is the appropriate emblem of military strength. Here, as often elsewhere, we have the king of Babylon "the servant of the Lord." The curse of Egypt includes a great slaughter of her people, and their dispersion into foreign lands.

**Chap. 31.** This chapter is one distinct and entire message, presenting under the figure of a cedar of Lebanon the case of Assyria, as a lesson of warning to Egypt. If Assyria, so splendid and magnificent in her greatness, yet went down with a crash that astounded the nations, what, O Pharaoh, shall be thy doom? This message dates only one month and a fraction before the fall of Jerusalem. The fall of Assyria, referred to here as a fact of past history, occurred B.C. 625—*i.e.*, thirty-seven years before the date of this message. Hence it was still fresh in the minds of Ezekiel's readers. The figure which is finely sustained throughout the chapter is one of exquisite beauty. The Assyrian power was a noble cedar of Lebanon, lofty and fair, of far outspreading magnificent foliage; his roots reaching out to living waters; all the fowls of heaven nestled in his boughs; all the beasts of the field made their homes under his shade; but he became proud, and God laid him low, and brought him down to the under-world, even as mortals die and go down to the shades beneath. Art thou, O

Egypt, great like this Assyrian cedar? If in thy vanity thou hast compared thyself to proud Assyria, think whether for thy pride thou shalt not suffer an equally terrible fall! H. C.

The Assyrian empire, after having been supreme in Asia for four centuries, had been overthrown by the united forces of the Babylonians and Medes, in the year of the battle of Carchemish (B.C. 606), which had broken the power of Egypt. This gives force to the warning to Egypt from Assyria's fall. B. C.

**6, 7.** In a few instances the prophet drops his figure and gives his thought in literal terms—*e.g.*, "under his shadow dwelt all great nations"—*i.e.*, enjoying his military protection and paying him tribute. This was the relation sustained in those ages by the smaller powers to the great central one. Assyria, Chaldaea and Persia were successively such central powers.

**8, 9.** The prophet thinks of Eden, the garden of God, as a model of superlative fertility and beauty. This and similar allusions (*e.g.*, chap. 28: 13) show that the Jews of that age had some knowledge of the primeval state of man, doubtless as much as has come down to us in the account given by Moses in Genesis. It is safe to assume that they had this. H. C.

**16.** *All the trees of Eden shall be comforted.* The deceased princes, his allies and tributaries, described here as so many stately trees and cedars, shall feel some mitigation of their calamity, in considering that this king, so mighty and so powerful, is brought like themselves to the nether parts of the earth; or that he is become their equal in the pit, in the grave, in the place of darkness, from which all distinctions of quality and condition are entirely banished. (*Calmet.*) W. Louth.

**18.** The mighty God before whom great Assyria could not stand is equally able to bring down thy greatness, paralyze thy power, and cast thee into that under-world where the silence of death reigns supreme! So puny are the mightiest nations when they measure arms with the great God! So vain it is for any of them, even the most magnificent in splendor, to lift themselves up against their Infinite Maker and Lord!

**Chap. 32.** This chapter in two distinct messages—*viz.*, verses 1–16 and verses 17–32, with each its distinct date, completes the prophecy concerning the fall of Egypt before the arms of Nebuchadnezzar. The date of the first portion is a year and seven months after the fall of Jerusalem; the second portion is still fifteen days later; for the month not being mentioned, we must assume it to be the same

as in verse 1. The danger to Egypt from the Chaldean arms was manifestly greater and more obvious *after* the fall of Jerusalem than at any time before. Whether the Chaldeans invaded Egypt near this time and before their long siege of Tyre remains in some doubt. Profane history at this period affords only the most scanty records. That they swept over Egypt with terrible devastation *after* their work on Tyre was finished admits of no doubt. It is not improbable that they made a raid upon their old enemy before they invested Tyre. H. C.

About one year and seven months after the destruction of Jerusalem. In the mean time had occurred the murder of Gedaliah and the flight into Egypt of the Jews left behind by the Chaldeans under Johanan, the son of Kareah (Jer. 41–43). Jeremiah, who had accompanied them, foretold their ruin (Jer. 44) in a prophecy probably contemporaneous with the present prophecy of Ezekiel, which is delivered in the form of a dirge, as in the case of Tyre (chap. 27). B. C.

The prophet wails over the fall of Egypt, and in vision sees her multitudes in the underworld as one who should walk at nightfall after a battle over a vast and desolate plain covered with the heaps of dead. As he walks onward wailing he reaches that part of the field where the Assyrians lie; then he finds further on the Elamites, then Meshech, Tubal and all her multitude, then Edom, then the Zidonians. Last of all, he returns to contemplate Pharaoh again. In each of these wide regions of death the kings and princes lie with all their slain warriors about them. Their swords lie in soldier fashion under their heads. Even in death and frightfully mangled, the brawny strength and grim ferocity and military prowess that they wore in life is still plain enough. But now they lie vanquished, unburied, horrible. Nothing that Dante ever wrote surpasses the dreary ghastliness of this appalling scene under the murky skies of Sheol. The slow, monotonous movement of the funeral march, which will not be hastened from detailed inspection of a single acre of that limitless Waterloo plain, powerfully enhances the impression of the uncounted multitudes of the dead to be reviewed. "Dull and heavy" (*Ewald*) we should not call this dirge, but grim as the clank of chains and dreadful as the knell of doom. *Ballantine.*

**1, 2.** "Take up a lamentation"—prepare a mourning elegy which may be sung as a dirge over his fall. It was appropriate in such a dirge to celebrate the valor and recount the

great deeds of the dead. In the present case the prophet is not excessively eulogistic. God loves truth. H. C.

To the preceding funeral panegyric over Assyria, the fate of which was past, Ezekiel prophetically subjoins a similar panegyric over Egypt, though its fate was still future; making plainly here a happy variation in the figure. In the former case past events are brought down and represented as now present before our eyes; whereas, on the contrary, by this prophetic figure future events are anticipated, and represented as already past. *Abp. Newcome.*

**3, 4.** Consequently, with the aid of many people (the Chaldeans), the Lord will take up this monster crocodile, Pharaoh, in his net, and leave him cast out upon the land in the open field, meat for fowls and beasts.

**7, 8.** The figure changes. Calamity is here represented by darkness, perhaps with a tacit reference to the plague of darkness (Ex. 10: 21-23). "When I shall put them out;" meaning, extinguish them from being a light among the nations. Cloud and eclipse combine to shut off the lights of heaven and to doom the land to thick darkness. This figure appears frequently in the poetic portions of the Bible, sometimes in the strong form of "turning the sun into darkness and the moon into blood." (See Isa. 13: 10; Joel 2: 10, 30, 31; 3: 15.) The general sense is the same throughout all these variations of the figure—viz., exceeding great calamity, fearful ruin. Light is a natural emblem of joy and prosperity; darkness, of whatever is fearful and appalling. H. C.—The downfall and destruction of kingdoms is denoted by the strong figurative language of these verses. Kings and rulers are expressed by the sun, moon and stars. God's judgments upon particular countries being earnest of a general judgment, they are described in such terms, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved. *Abp. Newcome.*

**9, 10.** This is the effect of Pharaoh's fall upon other nations, even those whom he had little known, lying out beyond the range of his influence. This reference implies that the fall of Egypt would impress the fear of the Chaldean arms upon remote nations.

**11, 12.** The prophecy is here entirely definite. The conquering, wasting power is the Chaldean. They shall spoil the glory of Egypt, waste her treasures, pillage her cities, break down her national strength, and lay her land for the time quite desolate. H. C.

**14.** *Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, etc.* The

prophet, in the second verse, compared the disturbances the Egyptians gave their neighbors to the troubling and fouling of waters; in allusion to which metaphor he saith here, that when Egypt is made desolate, and the number of men and beasts diminished by their wars and confusions, then their neighbors will enjoy such quietness as a river does, that smoothly glides along and never hath its streams fouled or disturbed. *W. Loeft.*

**17.** This entire second message commencing here constitutes another elegy over the fall of Egypt.

**21.** The sense is, The strongest of his mighty ones shall accost him and his helpers, from the midst of hell. They have already gone down and are lying there, the uncircumcised, slain with the sword. The reference here to Isa. 14 is obvious.

**22, 23.** The general statement, "the strong among the mighty," here becomes specific, and first names Assyria, the ancient rival and enemy of Egypt. She has been destroyed already, and lies there with her hosts.

**24, 25.** Elam has suffered overthrow; her nationality has been smitten. Let her be added to the list of the great nations in the underworld, ready to meet Egypt when she comes down to the same abode. Elam has had her day of power, a terror to the living nations; but she also bears the shame of those who go down to a dishonored national grave.

**31, 32.** The prophet marks the contrast between the terror he once impressed on the nations, and his utter powerlessness now in his final house in the underworld. This poetic drapery thrown round the idea of an extinct nationality—a nation itself dying out from among the powers of the earth under the righteous judgments of God—is grand and impressive. Its lessons belong to all time. The nations of our own age who become great in military power, magnificent in their wealth and splendor, and then forget God, disown His authority, and plant their foot upon His higher law and oppress His suffering poor, have ample cause for fear and trembling. Let them ponder the lessons He has given them in His holy Word, confirmations of which are written also on all the face of the world's history since nations began to be, to this hour. Can there be a greater madness than to dare Jehovah's wrath? H. C.

Of fulfilled prophecies, in these chapters and those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah, a few

suggestive instances may be mentioned. The sceptre has departed from Egypt, the "son of Ham," and the land has been laid waste by the hand of strangers (Zech. 10 : 11 ; Ezek. 30 : 12). The arm of Pharaoh has been broken and the sword has fallen out of his hand, and all the nations that dwell under his shadow have been shaken at the sound of his fall (Ezek. 30 : 20 ; 31 : 16). The heart of Egypt has melted, and all that work for hire have been grieved in soul, for in truth she has been for centuries growning under the hand of a cruel lord. The fishermen lament ; for the canals are emptied and dried up (Isa. 19), and the reeds and flags have withered. The paper industry has utterly vanished, and scarcely a solitary specimen of the papyrus plant can be obtained, even for a museum—according to the specific declaration of the prophet (verses 6, 7). " Moreover, they that work in combed flax and they that weave white cloth" are made " ashamed" in the presence of English merchants who, to-day, monopolize the trade, where, at the date of this prophecy, the Theban looms were sending forth fabrics which were then the pride as they are now the astonishment of the whole earth (Isa. 18 : 9). Truly, this has become " a land destitute of that whereof it was full" (Ezek. 32 : 15). The " cloud" has covered her (Ezek. 29 : 3). She has become the " basest of kingdoms," no more to " lift herself up above the nations" (verse 15). More than this, every one of the seven original out-

lets of the Nile has been dried up (the two present outlets being artificial ones), and the tongue of the Egyptian sea has been smitten and the waters of the gulf have been driven back as by a mighty hand a score of miles since the days of Isaiah " according to the Word of the Lord" (Isa. 11 : 15). The " obelisks" and " pillars" of On have fallen ; only one remains upright amid the vast ruins of the " houses of the gods," which have been " burnt with fire" (Jer. 43 : 13). Of Memphis, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, it was written, " Noph shall become a desolation and shall be burnt up, without an inhabitant" (Jer. 46 : 19). To-day not even a single obelisk, or prostrate pylon, or shivered temple wall marks the site of that famous capital. It has sunk into oblivion. It is but a pile of dust and crumbled brick. Unlike other ancient cities of Egypt, in a peculiar sense, it has become a " desolation." " Destruction out of the north is come—it is come !" (Jer. 46 : 19.) Of Thebes also, that wonder of the world, the pen of the prophet wrote : " No shall be rent asunder," " shattered," " broken in pieces" (Ezek. 30 : 16), and, as if struck by the fist of the Almighty, those massive columns have been cleft and torn asunder as nowhere else in Egypt. Historically, the cause was an earthquake. But before the earthquake came the solemn warning, " The Word of the Lord is against you." *U. M. Coburn*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXXIII.

- 33 : 1, 2 AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people  
3 of the land take a man from among them, and set him for their watchman : if, when he seeth  
4 the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people ; then whosoever  
5 heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come, and take him  
6 away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took  
7 not warning ; his blood shall be upon him : whereas if he had taken warning he should have  
8 delivered his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and  
9 the people be not warned, and the sword come, and take any person from among them : he  
10 man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou,  
11 son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore hear the word at  
12 my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man,  
13 thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way ; that wicked  
14 man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if  
15 thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way ; he shall die  
16 in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.
- 17 And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Israel : Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgres-

11 sions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them ; how then should we live ? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will  
 12 ye die, O house of Israel ? And thou, son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression ; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness : neither shall he that is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he  
 13 sinneth. When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live ; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered ; but in his  
 14 iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right ; if the  
 15 wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of his life, committing no iniquity ; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he  
 16 hath committed shall be remembered against him : he hath done that which is lawful and right ; he shall surely live. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not  
 17 equal : but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his right  
 18 counsellor, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die therein. And when the wicked turneth  
 20 from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth  
 22 day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me in the evening, afore he that was  
 23 escaped came ; and he had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning ; and my  
 24 mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. And the word of the Lord came unto me,  
 25 saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those waste places in the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land ; but we are many ; the land is given us for in-  
 26 heritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : Ye eat with the blood, and  
 27 lift up your eyes unto your idols, and shed blood : and shall ye possess the land ? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife : and  
 28 shall ye possess the land ? Thus shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : As I live, surely they that are in the waste places shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the  
 29 open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the strong holds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. And I will make the land a desolation and an aston-  
 30 ishment, and the pride of her power shall cease ; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have  
 31 made the land a desolation and an astonishment, because of all their abominations which they have committed. And as for thee, son of man, the children of thy people talk of thee  
 32 by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the  
 33 Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not : for with their mouth they shew much love,  
 but their heart goeth after their gain. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument : for they hear thy words,  
 but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (behold, it cometh,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

**Chap. 33.** This chapter has a manifest unity of purpose throughout, its aim considered as a series of revelations from God to the prophet being first to impress his own mind with a just sense of his responsibility for the souls of the people, and then to give him certain messages which demanded precisely this conscious sense of responsibility, and this true fidelity in their deliverance to the people. The messages to be borne to the people were : 1.

An earnest rebuke and refutation of the charge against God of crushing the people down under His judgments in a way to crush out all hope from their souls (verses 10-20). 2. A message respecting the survivors in the land of Judah, designed to slay their false hopes and open their eyes both to their own sins and to the certain ruin of their own land (verses 21-29). 3. A rebuke of the heartless but nicely critical *heav-*  
*ing* of the people in exile (verses 30-33). In a

moral and spiritual point of view, the chapter is one of the highest interest and value, bearing with immense power on the spiritual life of the people among whom Ezekiel labored, and applying with equal force to the spiritual state of multitudes in every Gospel land. H. C.

**1-10.** The first *ten* verses of this chapter are the same with chap. 3 : 17-22. Here, the people choose the watchman ; there, the Lord appoints him. When God chooses, the people should approve. A. C.

**1-6.** In view of the predatory and nomadic habits of that age and country, the business of the watchman is drawn here to the life. He does not stand on some lofty tower or battlement of the walled city ; but he is a scout, far out on the borders of the land, on the mountain tops, where his practised eye will command a sweep of the great travelled routes which an invading foe must take. Then, trumpet in hand, he is ready to give the shrill and long notes of danger when he sees the sword of some invading foe approaching. The same illustration of the moral duty and responsibility of the Lord's prophets and indeed of all His ministering servants appears chap. 3 : 17-21. The case supposed and its application are entirely clear. When it is made a man's special duty to give warning of danger, when the life of a nation depends on his faithfulness, he has but one course to think of ; he must be on the alert to mark approaching danger, and must be faithful to make it known to his people. Else the blood of souls will be required of him. If he does this duty faithfully, and the people, duly warned, give no heed to his warnings, their blood will be on their own head. He has done his duty and they die in their folly and under their own righteous curse. So every minister of the Gospel, and indeed every Christian man or woman, each in their own sphere, bear responsibilities for others' souls. If they see others in sin, exposed to perdition, they are solemnly bound to give them warning. Special circumstances may intensify this responsibility, but no possible circumstances can exempt any human being, intelligent of obligation, from the duty of warning faithfully whomsoever he may see in this danger. H. C.

**3-6.** In heathenism, prediction was absolute ; in the Old Testament, prophecy was never absolute, but always subject to moral conditions. Commenting on the 33d chapter of Ezekiel, which declared that the prediction of death to the wicked and life to the righteous were not absolute, but would be reversed on

their moral change, Jerome aptly observes : " Nor does it follow that because a prophet foretold, that which he foretold should come to pass ; for he does not foretell in order that it might take place, but lest it should take place."

It is in this sense that Holy Scripture, taking the human point of view, so often speaks of God's repenting. All the prophets who announced judgment also called to repentance, and all such calls—as so many in the prophecies of Isaiah ; in Jer. 4 : 3-5 ; Ezek. 18 : 30-32 ; Joel 2 : 12-14, and in other passages—were accompanied by the promise that in case of obedience the predicted judgments would be averted. More especially do we refer to the words of Jeremiah (18 : 7-10). A. E.

**7.** God hath hired servants to fight against sin. He hath employed advocates to plead against it ; He hath made laws and decrees against it ; He hath despatched prophets to warn us of it ; and hath established an order of men, men of His own family, and who are fed at His own charges, whose office is, like watchmen, to give an alarm at every approach of sin with as much affrightment as if an enemy were near, or the sea broke in upon a flat country. *Bp. Taylor.*

**10.** " Therefore," implies that the prophet's responsibilities come into play at once as a watchman in rebuking this slanderous imputation. This plea of a hopeless doom assumed that God was heartlessly severe and which ignored His repeated promise of mercy to the penitent. Hence the Lord replies as one abused and wronged by an unjust implication. H. C.

**11.** *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.* From this to the twentieth verse inclusive is nearly the same with chap. 18. A. C.

The implied charge (verse 10) touched the character and the heart of God in a tender point. Nothing could be so cruelly unjust ! Had not their own God and Father loved them and borne with them in all long-suffering and with exceedingly great compassion ? Had He ever said or done anything which could with any fairness be construed to imply that He had pleasure in the death of the wicked ? Never ! On the contrary, He had always shown that His heart was with the penitent, and His highest joy in those who turned, sorrowing for their sins, to implore His mercy. Had He not besought them to turn from their wicked ways and live ? Had not His heart and hand labored for this result ? Had He ever turned coldly away from those who humbly sought His mercy ? Never. So He declares here, under



the solemnities of His oath, affirming His innocence of the cruel charge which the people had by implication brought against Him, and again placing the issue between themselves and Him on its true merits—Himself entreating them to turn and live. II. C.

See also Isa. 5:4; Hos. 13:9; Isa. 65:2; Rom. 10:21; Jer. 7:31; Prov. 1:24, 29; Isa. 65:12; 66:4; 1:18; Jer. 6:10; Zech. 7:11, 12. Which passages, and many others of the like importance that occur, do imply the large extent of God's merciful intentions, and the competency of the means, which God affords for the salvation of men; that He wants no affection or inclination to save them; that He neglects no means proper for effecting it; that He draws them into the way leading thither by serious and earnest invitation, directs them by needful light and instruction, excites them by powerful arguments and persuasions; and, as Ambrose speaketh, that "God hath showed to all, that, what was in Him, He did will to deliver or save all men." Whence He may truly and properly be called the Benefactor and Saviour even of those who by their wilful malice or neglect do not obtain salvation. *Isaac Barrow.*

And upon this foundation of God's mercy we may build our assurance that God's will is not then done when His creatures are undone; but that, as it was His pleasure at first to make us, so it is His pleasure still to preserve us; and as from His everlasting will we all have our life, so by His will we should all have everlasting life. When as yet we were not, His will was we should be; now that we are, His will is that we should be holy. And if any man sin, His will is He should repent; and if a man repent, His will is he should be saved. Let this will, O Lord, be as Thy last will, which yet can come but as streams from the fountain of Thy first will; for, as it was merely Thy will that at first made Thee to make us, so it is merely Thy will that must make us to be holy, that must make us to repent, that must make us to be saved. These wills in God are as the chain of His mercy, whereof every link is fastened to one another, and all of them firmly fastened upon us, unless by the violence of our sins and the sinfulness of our wills we do wilfully break them. O God, so frame our wills, that they may be fit links to be fastened to this chain of Thy will. *Sir Richard Baker, 1645.*

If there be any one thing true in the Bible, it is that God welcomes the very first approach which man makes to Him. The Bible has no other end than to give men the invitation to re-

turn to God. Christ, who fills the Bible from first to last, has no word on His lips but "Come;" and God Himself has declared, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." *Ker.*

Death means here eternal death. For why or how can God address mortal men, and ask them why they should die and be laid in their graves? To ask us "*why* we should die," and be consigned to the grave, and moulder back to dust, as if we could avoid it, would be to tantalize and mock us—and God would not, could not do it. But to ask us "*why* we will persevere and go down to hell, when we might be saved; why we would dwell with devouring fire when we might dwell amid the glories of heaven, is a question worthy of a God, and fit to be pondered by every traveller to eternity. *Barnes.*

"Sinner, turn!" says God. "Lord, I cannot attend to it," says the sinner. "Turn or burn," says God. "I will venture that," says the sinner. "Turn and be saved," says God. "I cannot leave my pleasures," says the sinner. But what grace is it in God thus to parley with the sinner! Oh, the patience of God to a poor sinner! What if God should now say, "Then get thee to thy sins, get thee to thy delights, get thee to thy pleasures, take them for thy portion; they shall be all thy heaven, all thy happiness, all thy portion?" *Bunyan.*

The Bible did not make sin the parent of sorrow. It did not make certain that every transgression and disobedience should reap its just recompense of reward. We are the causes of their coming upon ourselves; and the Bible but proclaims the end to which the paths of sin must lead, and beseechingly calls to us all, "Turn ye, turn ye! why will ye die?" And yet how many of you shrink from its merciful knife, that cuts into all the wounds of the festering spirit! How many of you feel as if "the truth that is in Jesus" was a hard and bitter truth; when all the while its very heart's blood is love, and the very secret of its message is the tenderest compassion, the most yearning sympathy, for every soul among us! A. M.

**12-20.** See chap. 18, where the same points are made with even greater fulness and more ample repetition. The bearing of these statements to the point now in hand is obvious. The Lord insists that He holds the door most fully open for the repentance of every sinner. If he will turn from his wickedness to cordial obedience, he shall surely live. If he turns from a just and upright life to sin, he shall cer-

tainly die. If the people charge their God with injustice in His ways, He denies the charge, and avers that *their* ways are utterly unjust and unequal toward Himself. His judgments of them will evermore be precisely according to their ways. II. C.

**14.** *When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, etc.* In the whole course of Scripture God's threatenings, and so His promises too, have ever a condition annexed to them in God's purpose; which though it be but seldom expressed, yet is it ever included, and so to be understood. All God's promises, how absolutely soever expressed, are made on condition of obedience; and all His threatenings, how absolutely soever expressed, on condition of impenitence. This is plain from the passage before us. *Bp. Sanderson.*

**15.** *Restitution and reparation for damage.* Under the Levitical law, reconciliation could be obtained only by repentance, and no repentance was accepted which did not prove its sincerity by practical reformation. For every transgression the law prescribed a trespass-offering. Where the transgression was of a mere ritual precept, and committed without deliberation or design, when discovered, the trespass-offering was sufficient alone; for this showed that the offender acknowledged the authority of the law which he had unintentionally violated. But where the transgression included any encroachment on the rights of another, the trespass-offering could not be received unless it was accompanied by a public acknowledgment of the offence, a resignation of the usurped property and a restitution to the person injured if he or his heir could be found; if not the usurped property was to be consecrated to pious uses, as the offender could not procure pardon while he retained it. No regulation could point out more clearly the inefficacy of sacrifice where guilt was not unfeignedly repented of, and all the advantages which had tempted to its perpetration renounced and resigned; and where full restitution to the injured individual did not accompany humiliation before God. *Graves.*—This shows us the absolute necessity of making restitution for any *wrong* or *injury* that we have done. By this law he that had done the wrong was obliged to make restitution to the injured person; and he is directed what to do in case the injured person could not be found. It was not his confessing his sin, not his sacrifice with that confession, that would procure his pardon if he did not make restitution as he is directed there. This is the doctrine of the law, and of the

prophets also (Ezek. 33:15), as well as of the New Testament (Luke 18:8; Rom. 13:8, 9). *Bp. Kidder.*—There is one doctrine relative to the economy of Divine Providence little heeded among men: I mean the doctrine of *restitution*. When a man has done wrong to his neighbor, though on his repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus, God forgives him his sin, yet He requires him to make *restitution* to the person injured *if it lie in the compass of his power*. If he do not, God will take care to exact it in the course of His providence. Such respect has He for the dictates of infinite justice that nothing of this kind shall pass unnoticed. A. C.

**21.** The date shows an interval of one and one half years from the taking of Jerusalem (Jer. 52:12) to the arrival of the messenger. The confusion which followed the capture of the city may have retarded the arrival of one who would furnish full and authentic particulars. The general news that the city was taken must have reached them, but it was only when the messenger arrived that the prophet's mouth was opened (24:26). B. C.

It should be noted that the word revealed from the Lord (verses 24-29) came to meet a feeling among the scattered remnant in Judea which developed itself some time subsequent to the fall of the city. Hence the date as here given is doubtless correct. Verse 22 implies that during the evening and night previous to the arrival of this messenger the Lord had remarkably opened His mouth to speak—perhaps by impressing His own solemn responsibilities as a prophet-watchman, in the line of the thought in verses 1-9; and perhaps also in anticipation of the effect of these tidings upon the people. The fall of the city could scarcely fail to make solemn impressions on the exiles. It would create a crisis, demanding the most urgent pressure of truth upon their heart and conscience. H. C.

**22.** The prophet was under the hand of God in ecstatic trance (cf. 3:22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1) on the evening preceding the arrival (in which trance it was communicated to him that his enforced silence should cease) and continued in this state until the arrival of the messenger.

**23-33.** The exhortation to repentance. So the preaching of repentance by John the Baptist prepared the way for the Messiah's kingdom. Before God speaks comfort He searches the heart; for only those who truly repent shall receive the blessing. Ezekiel first addresses the remnant that still linger in their ancient home, and warns them against presumptuous hopes

resting on false grounds (23-29), then he turns his eye to those near him, and points out that their apparent attention to his words was illusory. B. C.

**21.** Those who were then "inhabiting the wastes of the land of Israel" were the small remnant of poor men that survived the fall of the city. Jeremiah has given their history in chaps. 40-44. They are seen here deluding themselves with the hope that the land was given them for their permanent inheritance. Their argument ran thus : Abraham was but one man ; yet God gave him this whole land by promise, and all he could use, in fact. We are many ; certainly he will give it to us to repeople and to restore to its former greatness. Ah, how could they overlook the contrast between Abraham's faith in God and their unbelief ; Abraham's conscientious, consistent, most exemplary piety, and their persistent, deep-rooted, and unutterably loathsome iniquity ! They seem not to have had the slightest sense of the moral grounds on which God gave Abraham the land of Canaan.

**25-29.** The Lord's reply is in two parts : 1. To show them their sin and appeal to their moral sense whether they could or ought to possess the land (verses 25, 26). 2. To declare most solemnly that He would give them to the sword and the land to utter desolation, until they should know that He is the Lord, the righteous Ruler and Judge of His apostate people (verses 27-29). II. C.

**30-33.** The foregoing verses spake conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy, and yet returned not to the Lord ; in these verses those are reproved who were now in captivity in Babylon, under Divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with ; they made some show of religion and devotion ; but their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are here accused of is mocking the messengers of the Lord—one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it. II.

Here is an inside view of the moral life of the people among whom Ezekiel lived and prophesied in Chaldea, showing how they talked about him between themselves and behind his back ; how they sat and heard his messages ; how they enjoyed his rich, lively, highly cultivated and finely poetic style, and said very complimentary things about it and about him, but never thought of *doing* the things which the Lord through him enjoined as their duty, and

only let their heart press on recklessly after their unrighteous gain. The whole description is beautifully graphic and finely drawn, but in its moral showing is exceedingly painful, revealing among that people an intense depravity, and suggesting the fearful truth that other myriads of Gospel lands are using the preaching of the Gospel in the same way, for the same ends of amusement, the same gratification of literary taste, and the same pride in displaying their critical skill in making comments on sermons. II. C.

**32.** *And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song.* They were struck with his eloquence without regarding his exhortations and admonitions. It is no unusual thing for people to listen to discourses from the ministers of God, only to enjoy the satisfaction which a well-composed discourse naturally affords. Their ears are gratified, their sentiments are enlivened, agreeable emotions of various kinds are excited. So the hearer is pleased, the speaker is commended and followed ; but with no thought of practising one word that he hath said. This is the turn of mind so admirably described many ages ago by the prophet Ezekiel in this passage. But religious instruction could never be appointed to give such empty, insignificant delight as this : nor doth it in the least attain its proper end unless it influences men to forget the preacher and think of themselves ; unless it raises in them not a superficial complacency or an idle admiration, but an awful and a durable solicitude about their eternal welfare. *Alp. Secker.*

Many come to the Word only to feast their ears ; they like the melody of the voice, the sweetness of the expression, the newness of the notion. This is to love the garnishing of the dish more than the food ; this is to desire to be pleased rather than edified. Like a woman that paints her face, but neglects her health ; so they paint and adorn themselves with curious speculations, but neglect their souls' health. This hearing doth neither sanctify the heart nor the Sabbath. *Watson, 1696.*

There is something inexpressibly mournful in the thought of one who, week after week, month after month, year after year, comes to the place of worship, and hears and sees as if he heard and saw not ; the convenient season constantly recurring, Sabbaths dawning and setting, the weeks and months and years moving him steadily onward toward eternity, but no voice breaking the frightful silence of his soul, no light discovering to his view the scenes that hide in the eternal darkness before him. *Anon.*

Never is man brought into that state in which he becomes the subject of a spiritual change, except as his conscience is roused to action under the influence of heavenly truth. While it slumbers, all our demonstrations, however clear, and all our appeals, however forceful, are but "like a lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument"—as pleasing it may be to the ear, but as evanescent in their impression upon the mind; and when we know that stifling conscience is but throwing it into a stupor, we can easily understand that he who has been able to keep it down, and to smother its remonstrances, under the clearest light of the Gospel, has, in so doing, triumphed over his better self, and over all that is powerful in the means of grace, and all that was hopeful in his condition—and when you look at him, after having thus mastered his conscience, sitting unmoved when the messenger of truth takes his stand for God, and clearly illustrates and enforces with mighty urgency the claims of his Saviour, it seems as though all that was impressive about him had been turned to ice and iron and adamant; and we do not hesitate to say that as he has rendered himself more inaccessible to recovering influences, he has to the same degree rendered his spiritual condition hopeless. The most hopeless of God's creatures in this world is not, necessarily, the man of the greatest outward deformities of character, not necessarily the man of the fewest spiritual advantages, but the man of the most; the man who has been the subject of the deepest and most pungent convictions of truth and duty, which he has mastered; the man who has been brought nearest to the kingdom of heaven, yet has never entered it. Better for him that his conscience never should have been roused to action than that it should have awakened only to drink the anodyne which he himself had mingled for it. *E. Mason.*

Christianity did not come from heaven to be the amusement of an idle hour, to be the food of mere imagination; to be as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and playeth well upon an instrument. No; it is intended to be the guide, the guardian, the companion of all hours, the food of our immortal spirits, the serious occupation of our whole existence. *Ep. Jebb.*

Count yourself no Christian because you like thoughts and discourses about God. Be jealous of any gospel that merely pleases you, and puts your natural sentiments aglow. See

God in the flowers if you will, but ask no gospel made up of flowers. Look after a sinner's gospel—one that brings you God Himself. Doubtless you are hungry; therefore you want bread, and not any mere feeling after it. Understand the tragic perils of your sin, and think nothing strong enough for you but a tragic salvation. Require a transforming religion, not a pleasing. Be enticed by no flattering sentimentalities, which the children of nature are everywhere taking for a religion. Refuse to sail in the shallows of the sea; strike out into the deep waters where the surges roll heavily, as in God's majesty, and the gales of the Spirit blow. Man your piety as a great expedition against God's enemies and yours, and hope for no delicate salvation, not to be won by great sacrifices and perils. *Bushnell.*

Remember that God sent both priest and prophet. The law made nothing perfect. Men got used to the priestly function, and saw no other aspects of truth. The priest went into the holy place for them. They asked nothing, and reasoned about nothing. They were saved as they were. They were in the kingdom of God without effort of their own. The prophet taught more. He corrected impressions that were superficial. He showed how thoroughly the whole ethical life had gone astray, and everything was secularized and nominalized. The heart went after covetousness, and there was no God there. They made light of the name of God, which at first to them was too holy a word to utter. They heard His truth as it were a lovely song, and a pleasant voice, and a well-played instrument. It produced no genuine effect on their life. No sin was slain, no appetite was rebuked.

We need to be warned against the same sentimentalism to-day—a shallow and superficial life that is satisfied with merely outward forms or transient emotions; with that which is dramatic, which makes one "feel good," but does not go down into the very blood and fibre of one's moral being, and does not affect character. The apostle John, who approached nearest of any of the apostles to what might be called emotional experience, knocks flat all these fictitious and sentimental ideas, when he says, "If a man love not his brother, whom he has seen, how shall he love God, whom he has not seen?" God has brought in the prophet. His stern utterances of truth go down into the marrow of life. A touch of His hand crumbles to dust the mere manikin of a formal profession. *J. B. Thomas.*

We are passing out rather now into a kind

of holiday freedom, talking piety as a natural taste, enjoying our fine sentiments of reverence to God, and protesting our great admiration of Christ and His beautiful lessons—all in the plane of nature itself. Multitudes of us, and especially of the young, congratulate ourselves that we are about as good Christians, on the ground of mere natural sentiment, as need be. Nay, we are somewhat better Christians than there used to be, because we are more philanthropic, better reformers, and in that are so easily up to the level of Christianity, in a fashion of piety so much more intelligent. Our doctrine of the Gospel grows flashy, to a large extent, in the same manner. High sentiments, beautiful aspirations, are taken, sometimes wittingly and sometimes unwittingly, as amounting to at least so much of religious character. Where we shall be lauded, or stranded rather, in this shallowing process, is too evident. Christianity will be coming to be more and more nearly a lost fact. A vapid and soulless naturalism will be all that is left, and we shall keep the Gospel only as a something in Divine figure and form, on which to play our natural sentiments. *Bushnell.*

Amid all that illusion which momentary vivifications of seriousness and of sentiment throw

around the character of man, let us never lose sight of the test, that "by their fruits ye shall know them." That you hear and are delighted is not coming up to this test. It is that you hear and do. This is the ground upon which the reality of your religion is discriminated now; and on the day of reckoning, this is the ground upon which your religion will be judged then; and that award is to be passed upon you, which will fix and perpetuate your destiny forever. *Chalmers.*

The Gospel message leaves no man exactly as it found him. The difference may be very imperceptible, but it will be real. One more, almost invisible, film, over the eyeball; one more thin layer of wax on the ear; one more fold of insensibility round heart and conscience—or else some yielding to the love; some finger put out to take the salvation; some lightening of the pressure of the sickness; some removal of the peril and the danger. The same sun blinds diseased eyes and gladdens sound ones. The same fire melts wax and hardens clay. "This Child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel." "To the one He is the savor of life unto life; to the other He is the savor of death unto death." Which is He, for He is one of them, to you? A. M.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXXIV.

**34 : 1, 2** AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Thus saith the Lord God: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the sheep? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill the fatlings; but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with rigour have ye ruled over them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my sheep were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and there was none that did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, saith the Lord God, surely forasmuch as my sheep became a prey, and my sheep became meat to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my sheep; therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will

I seek out my sheep ; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land ; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be : there shall they lie down in a good fold, and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I myself will feed my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick : and the fat and the strong I will destroy ; I will feed them in judgement. And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I judge between cattle and as well the rams as the he-goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have fed upon the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture ? and to have drunk of the clear waters, but ye must fowl the residue with your feet ? And as for my sheep, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them : Behold I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and the lean cattle. Because ye thrust with side and with shoulder, and push all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad ; therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey ; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David ; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David prince among them ; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land : and they shall dwell securely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing ; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season : there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be secure in their land ; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bars of their yoke, and have delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the earth devour them ; but they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up unto them a plantation for renown, and they shall be no more consumed with famine in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. And they shall know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. And ye my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.

**Chap. 34.** The prophet, proceeding on his theme of restoration, has yet to pronounce a judgment, but not now upon the whole nation, but upon unfaithful rulers, whose very punishment will but further the good of those whom they have misguided. He shows what the rulers should have been, what they have been, and what in the coming times they shall be when the True King shall reign in the true kingdom. Hence follows a description of Messiah's reign. B. C.

In this chapter the Lord's people appear as His "*flock*." The figure of the shepherd and his sheep is maintained throughout. The corrupt priests, false prophets, and wicked princes of Israel and Judah stand here as the shepherds who have long had the care of the Lord's flock. They are denounced ; their wicked and ruinous policy is portrayed ; and they receive their doom. The Lord Himself assumes the care of

His flock ; will raise up His servant David to be their shepherd and their prince ; and so the highest prosperity shall ensue. As to date, it must be assumed that this prophecy follows the period named chap. 33 : 21—*i.e.*, follows the arrival of the tidings that the city of Jerusalem is smitten. Probably it was brought out immediately after. Remarkably in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the strain of prophecy is that of warning and denunciation *before* the fall of the city, but of consolation and promise *after* that fall. The reason of this is obvious. Before, the people were vainly self-confident ; after, they were desponding. Before, they needed stern rebuke ; after, the inspirations of promise and of hope. So God is wont to deal with His people.

**1-6.** Shepherd life was familiar in all the East. Whole tribes and nations subsisted mainly upon their flocks and herds. No won-

der therefore that it appears as a figure to illustrate the spiritual care of the Lord's people. Jer. 23 : 1-4 gives the outlines of this entire chapter of Ezekiel. The reader will readily recall the frequent allusions to the shepherd and his flock in the discourses of our Lord, especially in John 10. Nothing else in human life could furnish illustrations of this thing at once so simple, so beautiful, and so pertinent. Those men of leading influence in the Jewish State—the priests, the false prophets and the princes—for all these are included here) had fed themselves only and never the flock. Selfish men, they had sought only their own aggrandizement, and not at all the spiritual good of the people, or the honor of the God of Israel. The case of the flock affords many apposite illustrations of this selfishness. A bad shepherd neglects the feeble, the sick, the maimed and the wandering, and appropriates the fat and well-conditioned for his personal use. So had these vile men utterly neglected the spiritual culture of the people and sought only their own personal self-indulgence. II. C.

4. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were distempered, did not strengthen them, or heal them, or bind them up. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died; they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocence. They took no care of the poor to see them provided for. The priests took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error, to warn the unruly or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss and out of course everywhere, and nothing was done to rectify them. II.

7-12. The two great points made here are : (1) That God is *against* those vile shepherds and will hold them to a strict accountability ; and (2) that He will depose them from their place and assume the service Himself. He will do this work faithfully. He will seek out the wandering and the lost. Be His name praised for this promise ! II. C.

12. Humiliating as the fact is, it is, with the great majority of us, only when we are pushed on to that sense of impotence that either reason or faith so wakes up in us that we begin to cry, as we ought to have cried in thankful confidence and devout dependence all along, to our Lord. God's love is too loving to let us alone.

We would not begin right, or come right, in prosperity and health and youth ; we set our best parts against the Providence of Life, and are conquered. We would not grow up Christians in the fold, under the Shepherd's hands, and hence the Shepherd lets us run on the sharp stones, the barren ledges and thorns of the mountains, till we are quite certain we are lost, before He comes after us ; but then He is sure to come. F. D. H.

Frequently spiritual clouds are the result of falls from the narrow path to the darker way of sin. Indulgence of known sins and neglect of known duties grieve the Holy Spirit, and His influence is withdrawn. The pilgrim ceases to regret the lost sunshine. Thus he might remain until death sealed his doom ; but the Good Shepherd has said, " I will both gather My flock and search them out from all places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day." Those who have been once folded in His arms by regeneration to everlasting life can never perish. He seeks out the sleeping pilgrim, and arouses him by some salutary chastisement. Then the backslider is left to prove the error of his wanderings, the sinfulness of his slumber ; he finds, by painful experience, that his sins have cast a separating cloud between him and his God. He gropes his way in chilling shadows. But by the upholding influence of the Holy Spirit he is enabled to persevere, until at length—perhaps not till after a tedious and painful probation—his reconciled Father addresses to him the joyful invitation, " I have blotted out as a cloud thine iniquities, and as a thick cloud thy sins ; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee." How glad some, then, is the return to the sunshine of joy and blessedness ! *Moore.*

13-16. Scattered now in exile, the first promise is restoration to their land. This is natural. And it was true in its literal sense. The Lord did promise to restore them to their mother-land—and *fulfilled it*. But He promises here *more* than He fulfilled then and there in the restoration under Zerubbabel. This will appear more fully when we compare other prophecies of Ezekiel parallel with this—*e.g.*, chap. 36 : 24-28 ; 37 : 15-28. II. C.

13. While every other ancient nation on the face of the earth has been scattered, mingled and lost its nationality among the vast masses of the nations of the earth, there stands one nation, in its unbelief and rebellion, blindness and sin, most accurately fulfilling the words of prophecy, in maintaining its distinct nationality ! God, in His wonderful dealings with the chil-

dren of men, has taken the most perverse people on earth and, during the time of their worst perversity, their most terrible blindness and unbelief, and, without their designing it or knowing it, made them bear testimony to the truth of the words of the prophets, in maintaining their distinct nationality, while all the other ancient nations have mingled in the vast sea of humanity till their nationality is lost. How wonderful are thy works, O thou King of saints! *Anon.*

**17-31.** The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the flock. God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy He had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between some and others of them, to separate between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at His first coming, since for judgment He came into this world (John 9 : 39), to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away (Luke 1 : 53). But this distinction shall be completely made at His second coming, when He shall, as it is here said, judge between cattle and cattle, as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats. *H.*

**17.** This is a discrimination between the morally good and the morally bad. The radical distinction between sheep and goats in their temper and in their habits suggests the discrimination as to moral character which the Lord will bring to light in His judgment. Is not this passage the foundation of that remarkable language of our Lord in reference to the final judgment (Matt. 25 : 31-33)?

**18, 19.** Here appears yet another illustration of the spirit and ways of the vile shepherds who are now the he-goats, leaders of the flock, or the fat ones, leading the lean. They not only eat up the good pasture themselves, but trample down all they do not eat, reserving nothing good for the feeble; and they drink of the deep, placid and pure waters, and then foul the rest with their feet—so that they leave for the Lord's flock no grass but what they have trodden down, and no water save what they have made foul. Was this a small thing? Was it not more than merely *mean*? Was it not supremely *wicked*? *H. C.*

**20-31.** Jehovah having promised to be a Ruler of His people, the administration of the Divine kingdom is now described as carried on by One King, the representative of David, whose dominion should fulfil all the promises

originally made to the man after God's own heart. David fell short of the obedience required as a condition, and so even his kingdom did not reach the promised limits, much less acquire that solid peace which should have been its chief glory. To understand fully the scope of the Divine promises we must refer, first, to the terms in which under the law they were made to Moses, to David, to Solomon, with the conditions of their fulfilment; next, to the passages in the prophets, in which these promises are reasserted in the very same words with additions and enlargements. The constant repetition of the same phrases shows that the subject is the same, and that the promises in the law were not merely such as should fall to the ground in case of a failure of the conditions, but living promises that should take effect, though not for those who might have attained, but by their own fault did not attain to them. (Compare Paul's reasoning in Rom. 11.) The prophet thus seems not so much to add to as to explain and develop the original promise; and as the complete fulfilment of the spiritual blessings, which the prophets were guided to proclaim, was manifestly never realized in any temporal prosperity of the Jews, and never could and never can be realized in any earthly kingdom, we recognize throughout the Sacred Volume the one subject of all prophecy—the Righteous King, the Anointed Prince, the Son and the Lord of David. *B. C.*

**23.** *One shepherd over them, even My servant David.* Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd, to whom the title of David is given by the prophets, and attributed by Himself in the Gospel, and who has fulfilled all the duties, after having faithfully described all the characters, of the office. The Scriptures call this Shepherd David, because He was born of David after the flesh, and possessed in reality and eminently all those qualities which the Scriptures give to David under the figure of the Messiah. *Calmes.*

*He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd.* This prophecy was remarkably fulfilled when Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, "gathered in one the children of God, that were scattered abroad" (John 11 : 52; Eph. 1 : 10); among whom were many "of the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But it will receive a further completion at the general conversion of the Jews, when the time will come that they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23 : 39); and this signal event will usher in or complete the fulness of the Gentiles. (See Rom. 11 : 12, 15, 25, 32.) *W. Louth.*



**25-28.** The figure of the flock is still kept up with great beauty and force. God will make with them a covenant of peace, binding the wild beasts (outside enemies) to keep the peace with them and do them no harm. So the flock will be safe anywhere, in the wilderness or the forests. The last part of verse 26 should read, "I will bring down the great rain in its time; floods of blessing shall it be." The Hebrew word used here always means a great rain. The figure of rain as a symbol and pledge of all Divine blessings appears in Lev. 26: 3-6, 19, 20. H. C.

**25.** Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded (verse 25): I will make with them a covenant of peace. The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of peace, of all good, all the good we need to make us happy. The tenor of this covenant is: "I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them (verse 24), will own them, and will be owned by them; in order to this My servant David shall be a prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in them, and for them." Note, those and those only that have the Lord Jesus for their Prince have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be My people. If we take God to be our God, He will take us to be His people. From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion: "I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with

them; and they shall know it and have the comfort of it." H.

**29.** The reference is probably to the Garden of Eden. It promises that the Zion of the Lord shall be a second Eden in beauty, fertility and glory. The idea of renown, a good name, stands opposed to "the shame of the heathen" which they shall bear no more. They shall be no more reproached as a broken-down nationality, nor shall the name of the Lord be any more blasphemed on their account. The fertility of this plantation will sustain a great people and a strong nation; its splendor and beauty will lift them high above the reproach of the heathen. H. C.

**31.** "Ye are men;" then God knows what kind of persons we are, whom He has loved with an everlasting love. We are Adams, not angels. If you come into the Church of God, and expect to get among angels, you will be mightily mistaken; and if the brethren should receive you, and hope that they are receiving angels unawares, they will be mistaken, too. We make absurd mistakes through foolish expectations. We shall not find that our brethren and sisters are male and female cherubim, for they are men and women, and nothing more. They are fallen men, too, bearing about them traces of the ruin of their nature; they went astray like lost sheep, even the best of them. They are men—that is to say, they are only men; for the best of men are but men at the best. God's people are true men; when the Spirit of God is in them they quit themselves like men; they come to the front and bear the brunt of the battle. *Spurgeon.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XXXV., XXXVI.

**35: 1, 2** MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it, and say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O mount Seir, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee a desolation and an astonishment. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. Because thou hast had a perpetual enmity, and hast given over the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time of the iniquity of the end: therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee; sith thou hast not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue thee. Thus will I make mount Seir an astonishment and a desolation; and I will cut off from it him that passeth through and him that returneth. And I will fill his mountains with his slain; in thy hills and in thy valleys and in all thy watercourses shall they fall that are slain with the sword. I will make thee per-

petual desolations, and thy cities shall not be inhabited : and ye shall know that I am the  
 10 LORD. Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine,  
 11 and we will possess it ; whereas the LORD was there : therefore, as I live, saith the LORD  
 God, I will do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast shewed  
 out of thy hatred against them ; and I will make myself known among them, when I shall  
 12 judge thee. And thou shalt know that I the LORD have heard all thy blasphemies which  
 thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are hid desolate, they are  
 13 given us to levour. And ye have magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and  
 14 have multiplied your words against me : I have heard it. Thus saith the LORD God : When  
 15 the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate. As thou didst rejoice over the inheri-  
 tance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee : thou shalt be  
 desolate, O mount Seir, and all Edom, even all of it : and they shall know that I am the  
 LORD.

**36 : 1** And thou, son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye moun-  
 tains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD God : Because the enemy  
 2 hath said against you, Aha ! and, The ancient high places are ours in possession : therefore  
 prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD God : Because, even because they have made you  
 desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue  
 of the nations, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and the evil report of the people :  
 4 therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD God : Thus saith the LORD God  
 to the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys, to the desolate  
 wastes and to the cities that are forsaken, which are become a prey and derision to the residue  
 5 of the nations that are round about : therefore thus saith the LORD God : Surely in the fire of  
 my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the nations, and against all Edom, which  
 have appointed my land unto themselves for a possession with the joy of all their heart, with  
 6 despite of soul, to cast it out for a prey : therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel,  
 and say unto the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys, Thus  
 saith the LORD God : Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have  
 7 borne the shame of the heathen : therefore thus saith the LORD God : I have lifted up mine  
 hand, *saying*, Surely the heathen that are round about you, they shall bear their shame.  
 8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my  
 9 people Israel ; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn  
 10 unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown : and I will multiply men upon you, all the house  
 of Israel, even all of it : and the cities shall be inhabited, and the waste places shall be  
 11 builded : and I will multiply upon you man and beast ; and they shall increase and be fruit-  
 ful : and I will cause you to be inhabited after your former estate, and will do better *unto*  
 12 *you* than at your beginnings : and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Yea, I will cause men  
 to walk upon you, even my people Israel ; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be  
 13 their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of children. Thus saith  
 the LORD God : Because they say unto you, Thou *land* art a devourer of men, and hast been  
 14 a bereaver of thy nation : therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy  
 15 nation any more, saith the LORD God : neither will I let thee hear any more the shame of the  
 heathen, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the peoples any more, neither shalt thou  
 cause thy nation to stumble any more, saith the LORD God.  
 16, 17 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of  
 Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings : their way  
 18 before me was as the uncleanness of a woman in her separation. Wherefore I poured out  
 my fury upon them for the blood which they had poured out upon the land, and because  
 19 they had defiled it with their idols : and I scattered them among the nations, and they were  
 dispersed through the countries : according to their way and according to their doings I  
 20 judged them. And when they came unto the nations, whither they went, they profaned  
 my holy name ; in that men said of them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone  
 21 forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had  
 22 profaned among the nations, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel,  
 Thus saith the LORD God : I do not *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for mine holy  
 23 name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. And I will sanctify  
 my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the

midst of them ; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when  
 24 I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations,  
 25 and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land. And I will  
 sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all  
 26 your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put  
 within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an  
 27 heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,  
 28 and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave  
 29 to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will save you  
 from all your uncleannesses ; and I will call for the corn, and will multiply it, and lay no  
 30 famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field,  
 31 that ye shall receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations. Then shall ye re-  
 member your evil ways, and your doings that were not good ; and ye shall bathe yourselves  
 32 in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sake do I  
 this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you : be ashamed and confounded for your ways,  
 33 O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God : In the day that I cleanse you from all your  
 34 iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded. And  
 the land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that  
 35 passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of  
 36 Eden ; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fenced and inhabited. Then the  
 nations that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord have builded the ruined  
 places, and planted that which was desolate : I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.  
 37 Thus saith the Lord God : For this moreover will I be inquired of by the house of Israel,  
 38 to do it for them ; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the flock for sacrifice, as  
 the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts ; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks  
 of men : and they shall know that I am the Lord.

**Chaps. 35, 36.** The devastation of Edom and the restoration of Israel. Edom was included among the nations against which Ezekiel prophesied (25 : 12-14). But the fuller doom of Edom was reserved for this place, because Edom was one of the surrounding nations that profited at first by Judah's fall, and because it helps by way of contrast to bring out in a marked way the better future designed for Israel. Edom is the God-bating, God-opposing power, for Edom was ever distinguished for its bitter hatred against Israel, and so the ruin of Edom is the triumph of Israel in the power of God. B. C.

**Chap. 35.** This chapter records a prophecy of judgments on Mount Seir and the people of Edom. Of all the contiguous nations none seem to have cherished more intense and inveterate hatred against Israel than Edom. Hence the prophecy against her, put in brief terms before (chap. 25 : 12-14) is resumed and amplified here, manifestly in part for the interesting purpose of bringing into connection with it the greater mercies which God had in store for His own Israel. The next chapter (36) develops the nature and the force of this connection, showing how the jealousy of the Lord was kindled against the ancient enemies of His people, and how His soul was aroused to great achievements in their behalf out of regard for

the glory of His name which Zion's enemies had blasphemed.

**5, 6.** The personal ill-feeling of Esau toward his brother Jacob seems to have become the inheritance of his posterity age after age with scarce any perceptible abatement. The second clause of verse 5 refers to the day when the Chaldeans broke up their city, and the people fled for their lives. Obadiah (verses 10-15) implies that in this day of chief calamity upon the Jews, Edom was bitter and revengeful as even the proud Chaldeans ; looked exultingly upon the fall of his brother as of an old enemy : "spake of them proudly in the day of their distress ;" "entered into their gates in that day of their calamity" for pillage and exultant joy ; "stood in the crossways to cut off those that were escaping," and "delivered them up" to their Chaldean foes. To this great, damning sin the last clause refers as "*the end-sin*"—that crowning iniquity which God could bear no longer, but must punish with exemplary severity—the last sin in the series, and lying next beyond all those which God *could* bear in the sense of long-suffering *delay* to punish. This one He could not "*bear*." Verse 6, "I will prepare thee unto blood," is better read, "I will appoint or destine thee for blood." Edom had not been averse to blood in the day of his brother's ca-

family; now let him have his fill of it. Let it pursue him, even as his greedy sword thirsted for the blood of his Jewish brother, and chased him down to drink it!

**7-9.** "Him that passeth out and him that returneth," is the usual Hebrew phrase for the travel incident to traffic in those ages. This prophecy is the more noticeable because Edom and its great capital, Petra, had been for ages the great thoroughfare of commercial travel between Central and Southern Asia on the east, and Egypt and North Africa on the southwest. Her capital had amassed great wealth and had risen to splendor by means of trade and travel; yet under the curse denounced in this prophecy, no spot on this wide earth ever trod by human foot is less frequented to day than this same Petra! Desolation has made her deepest imprints of ruin there. H. C.

**11.** *When the whole earth rejoiceth.* After the return from the Captivity, when all thy neighbors, conquered by the king of Babylon, shall be restored in peace and prosperity, thou shalt be reduced to distress and desolation.

*Calmet.*—The Edomites never recovered their country after their expulsion from it by the Nabatheans, who drove them out of their ancient habitations in the time of the Babylonish captivity; they then settled themselves in the southern part of Judea, where they were afterward conquered by Hyrcanus, and obliged to embrace the Jewish religion, and so become incorporated with that nation. *Prideaux.*

**Chap. 36.** This prophecy is the sequel of that contained in the last chapter. *Calmet.*

—The Edomites have made their boasts (chap. 35: 10) that they should become masters of the mountainous parts of Judea, where the ancient fortresses were placed which commanded all the rest of the country. *W. Louth.*—When the prophet speaks Judea is waste. The heathen nations around, and Edom in particular, rejoice in scorn; but the land of Israel is a holy land given by Jehovah to His people, and it shall be theirs. The promises are those of temporal blessings—the rebuilding of the cities, the peopling of the land—the fruitfulness and increase. Although these temporal blessings were typical of Messiah's reign, yet we may not doubt that this prophecy had for its first object the return of prosperity to the land and to the people after their return from Babylon.

In fact, the Jews did, after their return, enjoy considerable wealth and prosperity, especially under the Maccabean rulers. At the same time, since peace and plenty were ever characteristic of the kingdom of Messiah, we may

believe that here, as elsewhere, the full consummation of all blessings in His kingdom is delineated and foretold. B. C.

The central idea of this chapter is that God's people having brought reproach on His name before the heathen, He will retrieve it from this disgrace. For the sake of His own glory He will restore His people to their land, renew the fertility of its soil, rebuild its long-time wasted cities, and (more and better than all) will *renew the hearts of His people*, taking away the stone and giving flesh instead; "putting His own Spirit within them, and causing them henceforth to walk in His statutes and do them." Yet lying back of this idea of interposing to retrieve His name from reproach before the heathen, is doubtless the more fundamental one—the *Divine purpose and promise of salvation to His people*; that in His own eternal counsels He had purposed to have a people saved unto holiness, and therefore could not and would not be frustrated in His purpose by their waywardness and sin, but would press the agencies of discipline and the yet mightier agencies of His Spirit to reclaim, renew and save. Thus He would show His people that He is really the very God, ever faithful to His promise, ever abiding in His love for His people. H. C.

**8.** *For they are at hand to come.* They, My people Israel, are near the time of their coming from Babylon into their own land. *Abp. Newcome.*—The most sensible interpreters seem to agree that there are several expressions in this chapter, particularly in the latter part of it, which cannot be literally understood of any event excepting of the reign of the Messiah, of the freedom that He has procured for His Church, of another promised land and of a chosen people, different from that of the Jews; but at the same time that there may be recognized in it certain forms of speech which have had their literal accomplishment since the return of the Jews from the Captivity. *Calmet.*

**12-15.** The general thought is that the land will be depopulated no more. But the real fulfillment of this promise appears only in its spiritual significance as relating to the true Zion of the living God. For Palestine has long been forsaken of the seed of Abraham and has long since ceased to be the local home of the organized people, worship, and institutions of God. But God's true Zion lives; has not been depopulated, but has been exceedingly multiplied even already, and doubtless is yet to be far more. (Cf. Isa. 54: 1-8.) H. C.

**16-36.** In this section the subjugation of

the world is contemplated in the overthrow of nations (Edom in particular) which immediately surrounded the Holy Land—the triumph of the kingdom of God in the restoration of the children of Israel to their native soil, a hint, but only a hint, being given at the close, of a more extensive and enduring dominion. In the following chapters to the end of 39 the conflict between the world and God is described in its most general form, and the absolute triumph of the kingdom of God fully depicted.

The honor of God is asserted in the gathering together and the purification of His people. Dispersion is the breaking up of nationality. The first step toward the re-establishment of a kingdom must be the gathering together of the scattered members. As the dispersion of the children of Israel was far wider and more lasting than the sojourn in Chaldaea, so the reunion here predicted is far more extensive and complete. The dispersion yet continues, the reunion will be in those days when Israel shall be gathered into the Church of God. The reunion shall be accompanied by repentance and conversion by the working of the Holy Spirit making them indeed the people of God. B. C.

**22, 23.** It was vital to the best moral impression upon the people that they should see that this interposition of God to deliver them from their captivity and restore them to their land was not done for *their sake*—had none of its causes or grounds in their goodness or merits; but was done entirely for His own holy name's sake, to redeem His character and throne from dishonor before the nations. These statements uniformly rest the case here, although (as suggested above) we may well go deeper, even to the eternal love of God for lost men and to His glorious purpose of redeeming a people unto Himself. H. C.

**22.** Have you ever thought what a wonderful and blessed truth there lies in the old words of one of the Jewish prophets, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake"? The foundation of all God's love to us sinful men, that passage tells us, lies not in us, nor in anything about us, not in anything external to God Himself. He, and He alone, is the cause and reason, the motive and the end, of His own love to our world. And unless we have grasped that magnificent thought as the foundation of all our acceptance in Him, I think we have not yet learned half of the fulness which, even in this world, may belong to our conceptions of the love of God—a love that has no motive but Himself; a love that is not evoked even (if I may so say)

by regard to His creatures wants; a love, therefore, which is eternal, being in that Divine heart before there were creatures upon whom it could rest; a love that is its own guarantee, its own cause—safe and firm, therefore, with all the firmness and serenity of the Divine nature—incapable of being affected by our transgression, deeper than all our sins, more ancient than our very existence, the very essence and being of God Himself. If you seek the source of Divine love, you must go high up into the mountains of God, and learn that it, as all other of His (shall I say) emotions, and feelings, and resolutions and purposes, owns no reason but Himself, no motive but Himself; lies wrapped in the secret of His nature, who is all-sufficient for His own blessedness, and all whose work and being is caused by, and satisfied, and terminates in His own fulness. "God is love;" therefore beneath all considerations of what we may want—deeper and more blessed than all thoughts of a compassion that springs from the feeling of human distress and the sight of man's misery—lies this thought of an affection which does not need the presence of sorrow to evoke it, which does not want the touch of our finger to flow out, but by its very nature is everlasting, by its very nature is infinite, by its very nature *must be* pouring out the flood of its own joyous fulness forever and ever! A. M.

**25.** The conception of cleansing by sprinkling clean water comes from the Mosaic ceremonial system. (See especially Num. 19: 17-19 and also Ps. 51: 9.) As looking to the exiles in Chaldaea to be restored to Canaan, it makes prominent the filthiness and abominations of idolatry. From these the Lord would effectually cleanse them. This became a great historic fact. The nation as such was cured of idolatry, at least during several generations. But this promise is good against all the filthiness and all the abominations of human hearts. The gracious promise of the Lord covers all. And there is a wealth of blessedness in this broad, magnificent promise! By what power performed and how applied, the Lord proceeds to show.

**26, 27.** Compare chap. 11: 17-20, where in briefer statements the same general ideas appear. The "heart" and the "spirit" represent what is most radical in human character—what is farthest removed from hypocrisy or from the merely external life. Comprehensively they embody man's deepest purposes and intentions—the governing will that animates his whole activities, and morally consti-

tutes the man. To make these wholly new is to breathe into the soul of man a new moral life. It changes the great drift and aim of his endeavors ; gives him a new object to live for ; inspires his soul with new motives, and brings him under new influences. It is made prominent here that this change is wrought by the Spirit of God : " I will put My Spirit within you, and (so) will cause you to walk in My statutes," etc. God Himself becomes a controlling power in the hearts of men unto a holy life. This is the great doctrine of the New Testament, taught forcibly by our Lord Himself in His statements respecting the new birth (John 3 : 3-8), and everywhere presented as pre-eminently the work of the Spirit of God. The heart of stone, contrasted with the heart of flesh, is forcible imagery, yet wonderfully true to human consciousness. Its significance applies appositely to the sensibilities—cold and dead, apart from the living, quickening power of God in the soul—but tender, flowing and free when the Spirit touches the soul and even makes His abode there. And yet we must not restrict the Spirit's work to the sensibilities. The intellect also—the mind's apprehension of Divine truth—is by no means unaffected in this great change from stone to flesh. The dullness of apprehension, the resistance to truth, which appears where God is not in the heart, may fitly be called "*stony* ;" while the sharpened thought, the quick apprehension, and the genial welcome of truth attach the qualities of living flesh even to the intellect. Yet these terms were never intended to be acutely metaphysical. They address the popular mind. Considered as so addressed, they are exceedingly forcible and happy. I cannot forbear to add that they reveal a most blessed, glorious truth—viz., *that God Himself becomes an effective power in the souls of men unto real holiness*. While all merely external agencies forever fail, this Divine agency is forever efficacious. It does for man the very thing he needs. His own unaided endeavors, his firmest resolutions, prove unavailing. Under his bitter experience of their failure, this promise comes to his soul as the dawn of day upon the thickest darkness. When God says, " I will put My Spirit within you and will cause you to walk in My statutes," his heart responds, That meets my soul's great want. It is enough. If God will grant me that effective spiritual aid under which I shall wholly obey and please Him, I can ask nothing better ; I aspire to nothing higher and nobler. As already suggested, this is the Gospel. These are the provisions of Gospel grace for the re-

generation and sanctification of unholy men. They are large promises. Nothing larger, broader, or richer appears in the whole New Testament. H. C.

God would give them a new heart ; a disposition of mind excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change in order to a universal change. All that have an interest in the new covenant and a title to the new Jerusalem have a new heart and a new spirit, and these are necessary in order to their walking in newness of life. This is that Divine nature which believers are by the promises made partakers of. Instead of a heart of stone, insensible and inflexible, unapt to receive any Divine impressions and to return any devout affections, God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in everything with the will of God. Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh. Since, beside our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will cause them to walk in His statutes, will not only show them the way of His statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom and will and active powers for every good work. In order to this He will put His Spirit within them ; as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier. God does not force men to walk in His statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in His statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us and put within us : Ye shall keep My judgments. If God will do His part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precept. The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavor to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to His precepts as our rule, and then His precepts must send us back to His promises for strength, for without His grace we can do nothing. H.

It would be to form a very false idea of the conversion of the heart to imagine that the finest examples and the gravest lessons are able to convert any individual. If conversion is at once a death and a birth, the death of the old man and the birth of a new man ; if conversion is in principle and in fact a victory over the world ; if conversion, giving us eyes to discern things invisible, makes us strangers on the earth by convincing us that so we are by

origin and destiny : if conversion is all this and nothing less, it supposes so complete and serious an abjuration of all the principles of the natural man, an abjuration not merely of his vices, but of his virtues ; it supposes such a general, unreserved, and unqualified sacrifice, without any expected recompense from God excepting God Himself, that it would be absolutely irrational to attribute to any instruction and example, of what kind soever, the power of producing a revolution so thorough and fundamental. *Vinct.*

*Self-culture* is what a man may do upon himself ; mending his defects, correcting his mistakes, chastening his faults, tempering his passions, putting himself into the charities he has learned from Christ, perhaps to admire, finishing himself in the graces that have won his approval or commanded his respect. But the work is a far more hopeless one than he imagines, and is almost sure to result, even visibly, in more affectations of character than are likely to be much approved. Besides, it holds him to a continual self-contemplation which is selfish, and keeps him all the while filing and polishing on his nature by his will ; which is, in fact, the most wearisome possible, or rather impossible, kind of self-attention. The old faults conquered, too, will be coming back on him just when he is conquering another set. And turning round to fight them off, he will find the whole swarm loose upon him again ; till, finally, getting worried and vexed and soured and discouraged, he virtually, though perhaps not consciously, gives over his whole undertaking. Oh if he could have gone up to Christ, or to God, in a true faith-culture, and let his faults fall off, as blasted flowers fall off the trees, dislodged by the life-principle in them, his beautiful thought of finishing a character would have been how easily put forward—without a care, too, and in the sweetest liberty. No man finishes a character who does not go above himself and take the culture of God's own Spirit ; by that growing out a character from within, which cannot be manipulated inwardly from without. If there be any good gift that cometh from above, and cannot be made below, it is character. *Bushnell.*

There is but one Being that can make a change in our position in regard to God, and there is but one Being that can make the change by which man shall become a "new creature." And He *has come*, and He has dwelt with us, and He has walked in the midst of this world, and He knows all about our human agonies and depressions and lowliness, and He has carried

in the golden urn of His humanity a new spirit and a new life which He has set down in the midst of the race ; and the urn was broken on the cross of Calvary, and the water flowed out, and whithersoever that water comes there is life, and whithersoever it comes not there is death ! A. M.

The spiritual change upon which the Bible insists is a change of feelings and passions, hopes and joys, rules and ends of action. The Spirit of the living God, in translating a man from the kingdom of darkness into that of His dear Son, does not give him a heart, but a new disposition of heart—does not give a man affections, but new objects of affections. The Spirit acts upon the heart, and man becomes "willing in the day of God's power"—and the difference between what he is and what he was, the secret of his wondrous change lies in this, that he loves what formerly he hated, and hates what formerly he loved. E. M.

There is no goodness without the impulse and indwelling of the Divine Spirit, and there is no Divine Spirit to dwell in a man's heart without that man trusting in Jesus Christ. The condition of receiving the gift that makes men good is simply and solely that we should put our trust in Jesus Christ the Giver, that opens the door, and that Divine Spirit enters. There are convincing operations which He effects upon the world ; but these are not in question here. These come prior to and independent of faith. But the work of the Spirit of God, present within us to heal and hallow us, has as condition our trust in Jesus Christ, the Great Healer. If you trust in Jesus Christ, He will give you the new life of His Spirit, which will make you free from the law of sin and death. That Divine Spirit "which they that believe in Him should receive" delights to enter into every heart where His presence is desired. Faith is desire, and desires rooted in faith cannot be in vain. Faith is expectation, and expectations based upon Divine promise can never be disappointed. Faith is dependence, and dependence that reckons upon God, and upon God's gift of His Spirit, will surely be recompensed. A. M.

O Christian ! renewed by grace, dost thou indeed believe that God inhabits thee with His holiness and makes thee His temple ? Be thou, then, a temple indeed, a sacred place to Him. Exclude covetousness ; make not thy Father's house a house of merchandise. Deem every sin a sacrilege. Let all thy thoughts within, like white-robed priests, move round the altar and keep the fire burning. Let thy affections

be always a cloud, filling the room and enveloping thy priest-like thoughts. Let thy hallowed desires be ever fanning the mercy-seat with their wings. *Bushnell.*

The comforts of the Gospel in the New Testament have their rise from the Old. The great promise of the Messiah is in the Old Testament, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." Nay more, the moral law speaks Gospel, "I am the Lord thy God;" here is the pure wine of the Gospel. The saint's great charter, where God promised to "sprinkle clean water upon them, and put His Spirit within them," is to be found primarily in the Old Testament (Ezek. 36: 25, 26). So that they who take away the Old Testament do as Samson, pull down the pillars; they would take away the pillars of a Christian's comfort. *Watson.*

**28.** *Ye shall be My people.* (Cf. 2 Cor. 6: 16-18; Heb. 8: 10.) The writers of the New Testament appropriated these and similar phrases of the Old Testament to the Church of Christ. The restoration of the Jews to their native soil which did actually take place was a step, a preparation, as well as a type of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ; and so the hills and the valleys of Israel, in the most enlarged sense of prophecy, are that better land which is to be the seat and the possession of the universal Church of Christ. Between the restoration of the Jews (the first step) there are many steps toward the end—the spread of Christ's Church throughout the world, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the acknowledgment of the true God—and we are justified in looking forward to a time when the Gospel shall be preached in all the world, and the earth become the kingdom of God in a fuller sense than it has ever yet been. But all these are *steps*. Our prophecies look beyond all this to the kingdom of God in the heavens. The reference to the Garden of Eden, the condition of the earth before man's fall to be renewed after his recovery, confirms us in this view of our prophecy—which is further supported and illustrated by the closing Revelation of John, when a new heaven, and a new earth, and a new Jerusalem marked the time when *the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people* (Rev. 21: 3). *B. C.*

**33-36.** In these verses the temporal side (so to speak) of these promises stands forth prominently. They needed to have a temporal side for the special encouragement of the exiles

in Chaldea, and perhaps I might add, for the verification of the promises themselves. But the spiritual side furnishes the richer installments and stands guaranteed to us by the fulfilment, already past, of the temporal part in the restoration from Babylon, and in the external prosperity which succeeded that great event.

**37, 38.** It is fully implied that the people were to pray for the great blessing just promised, a point of great moral significance. Definite promise should encourage prayer and never be held to relieve God's people from the duty, or exclude them from the privilege. But while this is *implied* here as often elsewhere, the precise thing affirmed in the text is that the previous prohibition of prayer for Jerusalem is now removed, and God is again accessible "to be inquired of by the house of Israel." In the words that follow stress is laid upon the great increase of population as being the central thing. It was central among the temporal blessings here promised. The word "flock" comes from the previous figure which accounts the people as the Lord's sheep and Himself as their shepherd. The population would crowd the cities densely, as the throng filled Jerusalem in the great national feasts. The general import is, You may rest assured it is in the heart of your God to do great and glorious things for His cause and people. If He names Canaan and corn and hosts of men, let it be that He thereby condescends to an earthly condition of things then present—to a style of wants then pressing and uppermost—but really means not these things alone, but things far purer, higher, and better. (See also Amos 9: 13-15.) *H. C.*

**37.** To the arguments against prayer, that God knows our requests already, and that God's decrees are immutable and cannot be altered by our prayers, I answer, prayer is not for *God's information*, but the *creature's submission*; we pray for His permission and His blessing. Gods' decrees do not exclude the duty of creatures and the work of second causes. The Lord, by the prophet Ezekiel, says, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel;" and in Jeremiah (29: 11, 12), "I know the thoughts of peace that I have toward you, yet ye shall call upon Me, and I will hear you." *Manton.*

I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel. God has spoken and He will do it, and He will be sought unto for it. They must pray for it, for by prayer God is sought unto and inquired after. What is the matter of



God's promises must be the matter of our prayers. By asking for the mercy promised, we must give glory to the Donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer, which God has put honour upon. II.—Prayer is the channel through which the Lord is graciously pleased to convey spiritual blessings to the soul. He knows all our wants, and without our asking Him, could supply them in the best possible time. But He will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do for them according to the exceeding great and precious promises He hath given. *Hannah More.*—*Power*, with God and with men for God, whether in the preaching of the Word, in the service of Christ's poor, or in the varied ministries of every private disciple, comes always and only in the *measure of faith* and of the Holy Ghost, in answer to *prayer*. The word of Christ stands unchanged to-day: *According to your faith, be it unto you!* And, *How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!* B.

The clouds of revival which pass from land to land, who can predict their course or trace their laws, and say why they pass on, and why they fail in blessing? This one thing we do know, and it is the most practical, that prayer is closely connected with the outpouring of the Spirit. He who has bidden us ask our daily bread from our heavenly Father, and the rain that is to give it, has bidden us ask, also, from Him this good gift of His Holy Spirit, and has assured us that He will not deny it. The spirit of prayer is itself, indeed, the spiritual rain begun, but we may detain it, and increase the refreshing showers. We can lift up our voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover us. *Ker.*

Prayer touches the only spring that can possibly ensure success. By speaking we move man; but by prayer we move God. It is through the medium of prayer that the littleness and meanness of man prevail with Omnipotence. "The prayer of faith" is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields; He looks upon every other power as more or less opposed to Him; but He looks upon this as a confession of man's dependence, as an appropriate homage to his greatness, as an attraction which brings down His Divine agency to the earth. Here every one may assist missions; and every tear in the closet, every pang in the heart over the miseries of those who are dead in their sins, every prayer lifted up in that retirement where no eye sees but the eye of Him "which seeth in secret,"

affords a most important benefit. These are the elements of success; these the pledges of final triumph. *R. Hall.*

The promise is, "According to your faith, be it unto you." Feeble infrequent, formal prayer will not meet the demand. It must be earnest, fervent, persevering, mighty in faith, abundant in strong crying and tears, the offspring of a deep spiritual agony. The ministry needs to confide with more childlike simplicity in the Divine promises. If they pledge what is impossible with men we are not to stagger at it, but believe that with God all things are possible. He can bring light out of darkness, make the parched ground a pool, give songs in the night, harvests in the desert, and turn the shadow of death into eternal day. This needs to be seen and felt in order that the throne may be boldly approached, the horns of the altar seized, and held fast till the heavens open and pour down righteousness. Such a thing as the salvation of a world is not to be achieved without fervent, effectual prayer, travails in spirit and groanings unutterable. *E. Thurston.*

If thou canst not help the great cause of God in any other mode, at any rate there is open to thee that of fervent prayer. How much may be done for the Master's kingdom by the "king's remembrancers," who put Him in mind day by day of the agonies of His Son, and of His covenant and promise to give Him a widening dominion! I doubt not that many sick beds in England are doing more for Christ than our pulpits. Oh, what showers of blessings come down in answer to the prayers and tears of poor godly invalids, whose weakness is their strength, and whose sickness is their opportunity! *Spurgeon.*

Little do we know often of the secret origin of the dews of blessing that descend on the churches of God. In the recesses of some lowly cottage, in the depths of some humble heart, may be going on the work of pious intercession, in answer to which the grace of heaven descends on us and on our children, on the labors of the wondering and joyful pastor, and on the hearts of the far heathen, until the wilderness and solitary place are glad for them. The time is to come when from every home such prayer shall arise. Let us sustain and swell, in our day, the ascending volume of supplication that is yet to roll around the globe, and never to fail, until over a world regenerated and purified the morning star shall again shout for joy, and the earth, emerging from her long and disastrous eclipse of sin and wrath,

shall yet again walk the heavens in her unsullied brightness—a *new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*. Till then we have no reason, no right to intermit our supplications; and it is only when, in the final accomplishment of David's prayer, His greater Son shall have come to reign over all lands and to have dominion from sea to sea—it is not until that prayer shall have been made for Him continually, and He shall daily have been praised, that the believer remaining on earth will be warranted to adapt to his own lips the touching and triumphant close appended to the supplications of the crowned singer of Israel: "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

The real reason of our reluctance to practise intercessory prayer is a want of sympathy with others, a want of love. He who prays with the largest sympathy, he who embraces in his prayer the widest circle of his fellow-creatures, is most in sympathy with the mind of God when he prays, has the key of God's heart, and therefore of God's treasury. *Goulburn*.

Here is a declaration and a pledge of the living God concerning a great duty resting upon His people; a declaration and pledge whose truth has borne the test of many centuries; which has stood, which stands to-day firm, fresh, which is uttered *still* to us and for us, a special incentive and leading encouragement to meet this specific leading duty. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet *for this* be *inquired of* by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will *increase them* with men like a flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts." To apprehend fully all that is included in the "*this*" which He will be *inquired of to do*, look at the context before and after. *First*, read the words *before* and *central* in the whole connection: "I will *sprinkle clean water*

upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols *will I cleanse* you. A *new heart* will I give you, a *new spirit* will I *put within* you: and I will take away the *stony heart* out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will *put my Spirit* within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes*, and ye shall *keep My judgments* and do them; and ye shall be *My people* and I will be your God!" Then read on in the words that follow after.

Read through the strange vision of the multitudinous skeletons parching in the open valley, how sinews, flesh, and skin came upon and covered them, and how the breath from the four winds came upon them and they *lived*, read through all until you reach the plain words in which are interpreted and repeated the truths set forth in the vision. "Thus saith the Lord God, *Behold*, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves. And I shall put My spirit in you, and ye shall live!"

This, then, is the thing which He will be *inquired of to do*, the exertion of His quickening Spirit upon stony, dead hearts to make them *live*, the application of His sanctifying Spirit to unclean hearts to make them clean, the putting His guiding, strengthening Spirit within quickened, cleansed hearts, and so enabling them to know and causing them to walk in His statutes; *thus making them* His people, and so increasing His spiritual house of Israel with men like a flock, in number as the multitude that thronged the sacred city at the solemn yearly festivals. This is the thing *promised*, and for the fulfilment of the promise the simple declaration is, "*For this* I will be *inquired of*, be *besought* by the house of Israel to do it for them"—the plain meaning being that He ordains such inquiry, such fervent entreaty on our part as the condition of His so doing. B.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTER XXXVII.

**37:1** THE hand of the LORD was upon me, and he carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones; and he caused me to pass by them round about: and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I

will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and  
 7 put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold an earthquake,  
 8 and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And I beheld, and lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above: but there was no breath in  
 9 them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon  
 10 these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came  
 11 into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our  
 12 bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off. Therefore prophecy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come  
 13 up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come  
 14 up out of your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

15, 16 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, And thou, son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house  
 17 of Israel his companions: and join them for thee one to another into one stick, that they may  
 18 become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? say unto them, Thus saith the Lord  
 19 God: Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them with it, *even* with the stick of Judah, and  
 20 make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou  
 21 writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be  
 22 gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two  
 23 kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they  
 24 be my people, and I will be their God. And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgements, and observe  
 25 my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and David my servant shall be their prince for  
 26 ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in  
 27 the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their  
 28 God, and they shall be my people. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

**Chap. 37.** The strain of rich and glorious promise still continues, looking primarily to the immediate case of the exiles to whom the message first came, but stretching its view far onward into the great sublime future of the Zion of the Lord our God. As to its figures and symbols, the chapter is in two parts. The first (verses 1-14) is a vision of dry bones brought back to life, vigor and beauty—to represent the restored nationality of the captive, dispirited Jews and their renewed spiritual life: while the second part (verses 15-20) gives us by a fig-

ure the enduring union of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Then verses 21-28 expand into a rich promise of the future peace and purity of Messiah's kingdom. The first section is prophetic vision and not symbolic transaction in real life. But the second section is manifestly a real transaction, of a symbolic character. H. C.

**1, 2.** By a prophetic impulse and a Divine power he was, in vision, carried out and set in the midst of a valley—probably that plain spoken of (chap. 3: 22)—where God then talked

with him; and it was full of bones, of dead men's bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought here, and the slain left unburied till all the flesh was devoured or putrefied, and nothing left but the bones, and those disjointed from one another and dispersed. He passed by them round about, and he observed not only that they were very many (for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead), but that, lo, they were very dry, having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been moistened with marrow, when they have been any while dead, lose all their moisture; the body is now fenced with bones, but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like those dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. II.

2. Before him on every side is the absolute victory of death over life. It is like the scene of some bloody battle, which no human foot has trodden during the ages that have passed away since the day of that terrible conflict. Nature has completed her work of destruction. Every vestige of life has disappeared in these dried-up remains. *Godet.*

3. The Jews were at this time captives in Babylon, and so dispersed through that vast empire that they said of themselves, in the language of despair (verse 11), "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts." Even the prophet himself looked on their case as so irrecoverable by human means that when God gave him a visionary representation of their state, by a valley covered with dry bones, and put the question to him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" his answer was, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." With Thee indeed all things are possible: Omnipotence may do this great thing; but whether it shall be done, or by what means it may come to pass, Thou, O Lord God, and Thou only knowest. *R. Walker.*

4-6. The pertinence of prophesying to dry bones becomes fully apparent when we get the true idea of their significance in this vision. These dead and dry bones, according to the Lord's own interpretation (verse 11), "are the whole house of Israel," as they lay in their captivity. They were saying, "Our bones are dried and our hope is lost; as for us, we are utterly cut off"—i.e., from being a nation; we are nationally annihilated. So the hearts of the

exiles had sunk into despair of ever returning to their native land and becoming again a nation enjoying the favor of God there. Now, despondency does not preclude reasoning, although real death does. Despondency does not shut off preaching—does not make it absurd to proclaim the word of the Lord. These exiled Jews were dead only in figure; they were dry bones only in the sense of being utterly discouraged, and of having lost heart and hope in their nation's future. Preaching and prophesying to them the word of the Lord was the legitimate remedy. It might perhaps have the aspect of an absurdity while they are thought of only as dead and dry bones. The absurdity comes of forcing the figure, not of understanding the fact it represents. A special interpretation has been sometimes put upon this entire vision whereby these bones are spiritually dead sinners, and their resurrection is regeneration by the Spirit of the Lord. In this view of it, the prophet (Gospel minister) prophesies (preaches) to sinners void of spiritual life, only because he is commanded to do so, and not because there is any natural adaptation of the means to the end proposed—their resuscitation to life. When this view of the sinner's death is pushed to the extreme of denying to him intelligence to understand God's truth and conscience to feel its force, the absurdity becomes glaring. Yet the thing to be said here of these views is that whatever may or may not be true in regard to them, they are entirely foreign from the doctrine of this vision. Any effort to make this passage teach the laws of regeneration is altogether gratuitous. The Lord should be allowed to put His own interpretation upon the visions which He gives. When He has done this we have but one duty—viz., to abide by it, and resist all abuse and perversion of God's Word. II. C.

7, 8. No sooner has Ezekiel uttered the Divine command to these bones, than over the whole extent of the plain, movement succeeds to stillness, and a mysterious sound to the profound silence. These bones begin to stir—to come together; they form into skeletons; then appear the sinews—and the flesh covers the sinews, and clothes itself in skin. But here the whole process ends. The organs of life are there, but life itself is wanting. They are no longer mere skeletons, but still they are only dead bodies—"there is no breath in them," says the prophet. This is but the first phase of a resurrection. *Godet.*

9. Formalists are like the troops in Ezekiel's army before they were quickened: covered

well with plump flesh and fair skin, yet no breath was in them; at distance a famous army, but on near approach, all dead men—no life in them until the Spirit breathed upon them. *Herbridge.*

**10.** The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, God the Spirit, to the pulling down of strongholds. Without His benediction the ministry of an archangel would never convert one sinner from the error of his way. But when He descends, with His life-giving influence from God out of heaven, then "foolish things of the world confound the wise; and weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, bring to naught things which are." It is this ministration of the Spirit which renders the preaching of the Gospel to men dead in trespasses and sins a reasonable service. When I am set down in the valley of vision, and view the bones, very many and very dry, and am desired to try the effect of my own ability in recalling them to life, I will fold my hands and stand mute in astonishment and despair. But when the Lord God commands me to speak in His name, my closed lips shall be opened; when He calls upon the breath from the four winds to breathe upon the slain that they may live, I will prophesy without fear, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord;" and, obedient to His voice, they shall come together, bone to His bone—shall be covered with sinews and flesh—shall receive new life, and stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. *J. M. Mason.*

**11-14.** The words *these bones are the whole house of Israel* say plainly that what follows is the explanation of the vision. In the vision, the bones were scattered on the earth; in the explanation, they are to be raised from their graves. But the difference is easily explained. The bones must have been seen in the vision, in order that the process of revivification might be exhibited. In the explanation, the dead condition of the people is described by the usual figure of bodies gone down to the grave. The restoration of the people to the land of Israel had reference to a primary fulfilment in the return from Babylon, but the chief purport of the vision was the promise of restoration from a death in trespasses and sins to a new life of holiness, fulfilled in the Gospel dispensation (John 5:25), but having its consummation in the general resurrection at the last day. *B. C.*

The simple meaning of the words requires

that we should regard these verses as the *explanation* of the preceding vision; and since at least verse 11 ("these bones are the whole house of Israel"), which declares the condition of Israel to be that of dry bones, must be symbolically understood, it seems quite arbitrary to take verse 12, where it is declared to those who have said, Our bones are dried, "I will open your graves," etc., literally. In any case, however, the vision is of the greatest importance in the development of the doctrine of the resurrection, which, though not resulting therefrom as its direct explanation, is yet implied by its obvious *application*. Tertullian had already justly remarked concerning this passage: *de cæno similitudo non competit; de nullo parabola non convenit*. That the power of God *can*, against all human thought and hope, reanimate the dead, is the general idea of the passage, from which consequently the hope of a literal resurrection of the dead may naturally be inferred, though the context shows that this is not what is here spoken of. The resurrection of the dead is, however, decidedly taught in Dan 12. *O.*

Those who find dark or doubtful passages in the Word of God should mark God's own interpretation of them and regard that as absolutely decisive; discarding all speculations of their own at variance with God's explanations. "O *My* people," breathes the tone of kind, parental recognition. Compare chap. 13:17, where, as if God would disown them, He calls them, not *My* people, but "*thy* people." The change from *thy* to *My* betokens the tenderness of returning love. It indicates that deep spiritual blessings are involved in this promised revivification and restoration of their own land. The reader will notice with interest that this vision assumes the doctrine of a resurrection of the dead from their graves. It is based precisely on this great idea. The figure is drawn from the fact of a resurrection, and of course assumes not merely that the resurrection of the body is a truth, yet to become reality, but that this doctrine was currently known by the Jews of Ezekiel's time. Figures, legitimately used, always draw their analogies from *things known*. Else they would only make darkness yet more dark. There is no law of language more rational, universal, and fixed than this; that figures of speech are legitimate and useful only when drawn from things palpable and visible, or from facts understood and believed. The thing we would explain or set in yet stronger light, we compare with something better known than itself; else our figures and analogies avail

nothing. In the case before us, it should be borne in mind that the resurrection is not a doctrine of nature. Nature never has taught it, and it never can. It comes to men only through revelation. The Jews had this revelation; else Ezekiel in these allusions to it would have been as one who speaks in an unknown tongue. Hence this reference to the resurrection irresistibly implies the general belief in that doctrine among the Jews at that time. A similar use of this figure appears in Isaiah (chap. 26: 14, 19), applied first to the godless nations: "They are dead; they shall not live; deceased; they shall not rise; because Thou hast visited and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish." Next he applies it to the penitent and trustful nation: "*Thy dead shall live; being my own dead body, they shall arise: awake and sing, ye dwellers in dust, for thy dew is the dew of herbs*" (fertilizing and life inspiring), "and on the earth, on the dead, Thou wilt cause it to fall." Hence the doctrine of the resurrection was certainly current among the Jews in the time of Isaiah. II. C.

**12-14.** Here we have the picture of a double restoration; primarily an external and political elevation of the people, of which the first phase of the resurrection is the image; this is the return from the Captivity. But a national restoration can give to a people only the organs of life—civil and social institutions—not life itself. For what is the most brilliant and prosperous state without life, without the Divine breath, the spirit of holiness? The return of Israel into their own country, if it was truly to deserve the name of a resurrection, must culminate in the kingdom of God; but this can only be by means of a gift from heaven—that of spiritual life. In Pentecost, then, we see the second act represented in the vision, and one which, while effecting the spiritual regeneration of the nation, will also inaugurate the new era of a salvation for all mankind. *Godet.*

This vision of the dry bones coming together at the word of the prophet, and then breathed upon by the breath of life, and by that quickening breath made to stand upon their feet and transformed into an army of living men, wonderfully represents to us that work of the Lord which began at Pentecost when the word of the Lord went forth, and the Spirit of the Lord with that word breathed mercifully and mightily on a dead world, renewed the moral force of the earth, and commenced that wondrous transformation, that regeneration which, having its beginning in the hearts of men, shall not cease till *all* things have been made new, a

new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell. *Trench.*

That the vision of the valley of dry bones relates ultimately to times yet future may be seen by a glance either at the context preceding or following. When the prophet had surveyed the dreary Golgotha, and beheld in the withered fragments of mortality with which it was filled, what was and what would be the hopeless condition of his people, he was commanded to prophesy upon these dry bones, and to say unto them, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." And having delivered to them that word, consisting of a promise of life and salvation, he is next commanded to prophesy to the wind, and to say, "Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." In other words, having preached to the politically and spiritually dead the glad tidings of deliverance, and invoked on them the vital influence of the Spirit, a moral resurrection ensued, which filled the valley with life and activity. It follows, then, that the same instrumentality will be made conducive to the conversion of the Jews, which will be employed with success for the conversion of the Gentiles—the ministry of the Gospel of Christ. . . .

If the house of Israel is to experience a spiritual resurrection, it is because the Spirit, whose emblem is the wind, will descend on the moral Golgotha, and replenish it with spiritual life. If the wilderness of the Church is to be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field to be counted for a forest, it is not until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high. If the world is to be convinced of sin, the Spirit alone is appointed and adequate to the office. But the only medium through which He operates in the discharge of His office is that of the truth; on which account He is designated by Christ Himself, "the Spirit of truth." The Gospel is the only weapon He employs in His aggressions on the territories of darkness, and hence it is called "the sword of the Spirit." And when by the successful employment of that instrument, He shall have convinced the world of sin, and have become the great animating Spirit of mankind, that which He has promised to write on the general heart is, the "laws" of God, and the "ways" in which He will cause them to walk are, in His "statutes." So that, when at length He shall be poured out upon all flesh, and when, as the one Soul of the whole, He shall have led them to crown the Saviour "Lord of all," it will be found that no moral conquest has ever

been achieved but by the agency of the Spirit, and that in achieving it, no weapon has ever been directly employed but the Gospel—that, from first to last, the sword of the Spirit was never laid aside.

Though the progress of the kingdom of Christ to the universality and glory which await it may be attended by a series of providential judgments, *that* progress will be made and that ultimate glory attained, by the diffusion of the Gospel directed and made efficient by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Let us “not, then, be moved away from the hope of the Gospel,” and expect that judgments and providential occurrences are to produce effects which are promised only to the diffusion of the Word of God. That judgments will accompany and pioneer its march through the earth, as they ever have done, we freely admit. But they are not to be regarded as forming an order of means distinct from the Gospel economy, and superior to it. They wait on its steps. So vast is that economy in its sweep and design, that it includes and appropriates every kind of agency; presses into its service the angel of wrath, as well as employs the angel of mercy; and lays under tribute all the revolutions of time, and all the dispensations of Providence. *J. Harris.*

While the agent of renovation is the Divine Spirit, and the condition of renovation is our cleaving to Christ, the medium of renovation and the weapon which the transforming grace employs is “the word of the truth of the Gospel,” whereby we are sanctified. There we get the law, and there we get the motive and the impulse. There we get the encouragement and the hope. In it, in the grand, simple message—“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” lie the germs of all moral progress. And in proportion as we believe that—not with the cold belief of our understandings, but with the living alliance of our hearts and our whole spiritual being—in proportion as we believe this, in that proportion shall we grow in “knowledge,” shall grow in “righteousness,” in the “image of Him that created us.” The Gospel is the great means of this change, because it is the great means by which He who works the change comes near to our understandings and our hearts. So let us learn how impossible are righteousness and holiness, morality and religion in men unless they flow from this source. It is the truth that sanctifies. It is the Spirit who wields that truth that sanctifies. It is Christ who sends the Spirit who sanctifies. *A. M.*

**16-28.** A prophecy of the reunion of Israel and Judah, the incorporation of Israel under one Ruler, the kingdom of Messiah upon earth and in heaven. *B. C.*

**15-22.** This scene is a real transaction. These “sticks” were rather rods than tablets, yet such rods that a name might be written upon them. The import of this transaction is fully explained in verses 21, 22—viz., the perfect and enduring union of the two kingdoms, Ephraim and Judah, in one. The revolt under Jeroboam was one of the saddest facts of Hebrew history. It occasioned terrible and destructive wars; it mainly severed the Ten Tribes from the sanctuary and from the entire Mosaic institutions, and precipitated first that northern kingdom, and ultimately the southern as well, into the depths of a most guilty and deluding idolatry. It then led on by natural result and rapid step to the national ruin of both kingdoms, and to the captivity of the masses who survived the shock under which the nations fell. Hence most naturally that rending asunder became a symbol of the sorest calamity; and in like manner the reunion of the two kingdoms into one became the symbol of the best, the largest, most enduring prosperity. So the figure is to be taken here—not so much a prediction of the gathering up of the scattered Ten Tribes, their literal restoration and actual reunion with Judah, as a general symbol of the greatest and best prosperity. *H. C.*

**16. Take thee one stick, and write upon it.** That is, one rod: the expression alludes to Num. 17:2, where Moses is commanded to take twelve rods, one for each tribe, and to write the name of the tribe upon the rod. *W. Louth.*—**For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions.** When Jeroboam at the head of his companions withdrew from his obedience to the house of David, the tribes of Benjamin, Judah and Levi still adhered to the government of Rehoboam. Besides these three tribes, many Israelites from the other tribes joined themselves to the same party, as appears from 2 Chron. 11:12-16; 15:9; 30:11, 18. Hence the expression, “For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions.” *Culnet.*—**For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim.** Upon Reuben's forfeiting his birthright, that privilege was conferred upon the sons of Joseph, of whom Ephraim had the precedence (1 Chron. 5:1; Gen. 42:20); which caused him to be reckoned the head of the Ten Tribes. Samaria, the seat of that kingdom, was like-

wise situated in the tribe of Ephraim, and Jeroboam, their first king, was an Ephraimite. Upon these accounts the name of Ephraim signifies in the prophets the whole kingdom of Israel as distinct from that of Judah. W. Louth.

## 22. One king shall be king to them

**all.** The Messiah is described as King of the Jews in most of the prophecies of the Old Testament, beginning with that of Genesis (chap. 49: 10), concerning Shiloh. From David's time He is commonly spoken of as the Person in whom the promises relating to the perpetuity of David's kingdom were to be accomplished. This was a truth unanimously owned by the Jews (see John I: 49); to which our Saviour bore testimony before Pontius Pilate, when the question being put to Him, "Art Thou a king?" He made answer, "Thou sayest" (the truth) "that I am a king." Paul, alluding to these words, calls them "a good confession" (1 Tim. 6: 13). The same truth Pontius Pilate himself asserted in that inscription which, by the direction of Providence, he ordered to be written upon the cross; so that the chief priests impiously renounced their own avowed principles when they told Pilate that they had no king but Cæsar. W. Louth.

Compare Zech. 12: 8 to the end of the book. The reign of the one King David is the reign of Christ in His kingdom, the Church. First will come the restoration of Israel (portions of the united Israel under the name of Jews) to their native soil. That will lead the way to the coming of the promised King, the Son of David, who will gather into His kingdom the true Israel, the term including not only the converted descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, but all who shall by faith be acknowledged as the Israel of God. B. C.

**23-28.** That this passage is Messianic, looking far down, not only *to*, but *into* the Gospel age, can admit of no question. "David My servant" is here (as in chaps. 34: 23, 24; Jer. 30: 9; Hos. 3: 5) the greater Son of David, to whom "the Lord God will give the throne of His Father David." So the inspired angel explained and applied these prophecies in Luke 1: 32, 33. The designation "My servant" identifies Him fully and beautifully. (Cf. Isa. 42: 1; 49: 3, 6; 52: 13; 53: 11.) The most precious fact of His reign is the moral purity of His people under His redeeming, sanctifying power. They shall defile themselves no more with their idols, nor with any of their transgressions! Let us not fail to notice the forceful repetition of the idea that *God dwells among*

*His people* in these latter days. "I will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore;" "My tabernacle also shall be with them;" "the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore." Ezekiel had seen the visible glory of God go up from the midst of the city as if to depart from the Temple (chap. 11: 23). With the fall of that Temple this symbol of His presence had of course disappeared from among them. But here the Lord pledges Himself to return and indeed to dwell with His people in forms and manifestations far more rich, effective and perfect than ever before. The ancient Shekinah was rather a symbol than itself a power. It prophesied of the glorious presence of God by His Spirit in the future days of Zion. But here those days are drawn up near the eye for a more distinct and impressive view. Christian hearts become the temple of the living God. Here are the germs of those precious thoughts which our Lord unfolded so richly when He opened His mouth to speak of the Comforter (John, chaps. 12-16), and which Paul grasped with so clear a view of their spiritual power in his letter to the brethren at Corinth (2 Cor. 6: 16-18; 7: 1). "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said; I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." The reader should not fail to notice that this very blessing—God dwelling with and in His people, making His presence manifest as a power unto their holiness and blessedness—is the great comprehensive promise of both the Old Testament dispensation and the New. It had the Shekinah in the most holy place as its symbol under the old dispensation; it was embodied in the promise and gift of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel age. To Moses the Lord said (Ex. 29: 45, 46), "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God." And again (Lev. 26: 3, 11, 12): "If ye walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and do them, I will set My tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor you, and I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people." These are specimen passages from the records of the ancient economy. As to the Gospel age it may suffice to refer to the promises of our Lord; "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him." "If a man



love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "He shall testify of Me." "He will guide you into all truth. He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you," etc. (John 14: 21, 23, 26; 15: 26; 16: 7-15). From Paul come these expressive words: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God," etc. (1 Cor. 3: 16; 6: 19; 2 Cor. 6: 16). "In whom (Christ) ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2: 22). Paul speaks of this doctrine as specially *well known*—one of the obvious and fundamental truths of the Gospel system.

Briefly, my views of these chapters of Ezekiel (34, 36, 37) are these: They are general, not specific; comprehensive rather than minute. Their central thought is *promise*—the assurance of God's love and faithfulness to His Zion, especially in His pledge of His presence as a power unto her sanctification. "I will be with you to sanctify and to save you from all your sins," is the elementary and precious truth which they bear. Now let it be carefully noted: *This great central truth applied under the old dispensation while it lasted, in harmony with the genius of that dispensation. It applies under the new, in harmony with its genius and spirit.* Under the old, it promised restoration to the literal Canaan and the re-establishment of the Mosaic ritual system. It came to the exiles with these cheering promises and hopes, in terms which they could not misunderstand. To them these promises in this sense were the very thing they needed, for the Zion and kingdom of God had not yet cast off the forms of the Mosaic system. But for the Gospel age, under the New Testament dispensation, these same promises had a new and different specific sense. Their general sense was and is still the same; but their external, specific sense has changed. To explain this change and to bring the practical views and the actual Christian life of the Church into harmony with it were the great struggle and labor of the

apostolic age. To induce converted Jews to let go the ritual and joyfully accept the spiritual; to forego what was exclusive and national in Judaism, and still retain all that its symbols signified and its promises pledged, cost the apostles whole years of intensest labor. That labor should suffice to give us the clew to the interpretation of these prophecies *as applied to the Gospel age*. That part of their significance which yet remained to be fulfilled after the death of Christ—no small part surely—must be seen in the light of New Testament ideas. We have the Gospel idea in the passages already quoted from Paul. Comparing Paul (2 Cor. 6: 16) with Ezekiel in this passage, we shall see it. In Ezekiel's sanctuary, God's temple of wood and stone, God dwelt in the visible glory over the ark. In the new dispensation, according to Paul, every Christian becomes "a temple of the living God," "an habitation of God through the Spirit." II. C.

**26. Covenant of peace, an everlasting covenant.** The God who makes peace between heaven and earth, between law and conscience, between Himself and sinful men. How does He make it? Through "the blood of the everlasting covenant." If there is a way between heaven and earth, an open way for hopes and prayers, for departing souls and descending angels; if troubled consciences are pacified and cleansed; if thunders of broken law are hushed into silence, it is because this blood was shed, because Christ died, "the just for the unjust." If men cease to fret and worry themselves with the troubles of life, for that they believe that all is well; if they lay aside all animosity, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and all evil speaking, and seek really to love their neighbor as themselves, all this is through the blood of the everlasting covenant. That is the fountain of all true peace. *A. Rulvigh.*

**27, 28.** Israel is the prophet among the nations, and its day is not yet over. The history that no theories can explain away, which binds us with the past, and looks on to the future, will not end less miraculously than it began. As Heine says with entire truth, the Jews who decline to practise any form of idolatry, and have followed after a law during more than three thousand years, are "the people of the Spirit," and even their worship of wealth, for which not they, but their Christian persecutors, must answer, cannot destroy the passion or the hope with which their teachers are still inspired. Yet again they may be spoiled and scattered; but enlightenment, civilization and

the growth of democratic equality have in them no elements, so far as we can discern, which will absorb Israel. He remains, as in harder times than our own, "the everlasting Jew." What we could desire for him is that he should fling aside his delusive Kabbala and his armor of the Talmud, and recognize in the New Testament such a law, embodied in a perfect and Divine life, as will set him free from casuistry, and reconcile obedience with the inward light of love and reason. It is strange, indeed, that he should hesitate to claim as his greatest inheritance the Christ who has established above Greek wisdom and Roman law an order of things which the prophets beheld in vision, but which only a Divine strength could

have made victorious and a present reality. Nor need the Jew renounce, in acknowledging his true Master, anything which the noblest of his race would, at all events in these days, insist upon preserving. To "modern thought," as it is called, his other sacred books, Talmud, Yetsira, Zokar, and the rest, will doubtless yield; but not the Bible. He has learned so much from Mendelssohn. Let him learn from "Chozari" that the olive and the wild olive, when Providence grafts them into one stem, will flourish together; and that the two covenants, which have a common past, were intended to work out between them, in friendship and not by antagonism—in love and not in hate—the future of mankind. *Lon. Quarterly*, 1892.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XXXVIII., XXXIX.

**38 : 1, 2** AND the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal : and I will turn thee about, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armour, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them handling swords : Persia, Cush, and Put with them ; all of them with shield and helmet : Gomer, and all his hordes : the house of Togarmah in the uttermost parts of the north, and all his hordes : even many peoples with thee. Be thou prepared, yea, prepare thyself, thou, and all thy companies that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited : in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, upon the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste : but it is brought forth out of the peoples, and they shall dwell securely, all of them.

**9** And thou shalt ascend, thou shalt come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy hordes, and many peoples with thee. Thus saith the Lord God : It shall come to pass in that day, that things shall come into thy mind, and thou shalt devise an evil device : and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages ; I will go to them that are at quiet, that dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates : to take the spoil and to take the prey ; to turn thine hand against the waste places that are *now* inhabited, and against the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the middle of the earth. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take the spoil ? hast thou assembled thy company to take the prey ? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take great spoil ?

**14** Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God : In that day when my people Israel dwelleth securely, shalt thou not know it ? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the uttermost parts of the north, thou, and many peoples with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army : and thou shalt come up against my people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land ; it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know thee, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord God : Art thou he of whom I spake in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days for *many* years that I would bring thee against them ? And it shall come to pass in that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up into my nostrils. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel ; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him unto all my mountains, saith the Lord God : every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood ; and I will rain upon him, and upon

his hordes, and upon the many peoples that are with him, an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. And I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations ; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

**39 :** I And thou, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal : and I will turn thee about, and will lead thee on, and will cause thee to come up from the uttermost parts of the north ; and I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel : and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy hordes, and the peoples that are with thee : I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field : for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. And I will send a fire on Magog, and on them that dwell securely in the isles : and they shall know that I am the Lord. And my holy name will I make known in the midst of my people Israel ; neither will I suffer my holy name to be profaned any more : and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it cometh, and it shall be done, saith the Lord God : this is the day whereof I have spoken. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall make fires of the weapons and burn them, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall make fires of them seven years : so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests ; for they shall make fires of the weapons : and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place for burial in Israel, the valley of them that pass through on the east of the sea : and it shall stop them that pass through ; and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude : and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them ; and it shall be to them a renown, in the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, that shall pass through the land to bury them that pass through, that remain upon the face of the land, to cleanse it : after the end of seven months shall they search. And they that pass through the land shall pass through ; and when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. And Hamonah shall also be the name of a city. Thus shall they cleanse the land.

And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord God : Speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come : gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. And ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgement that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day and forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity ; because they trespassed against me, and I hid my face from them : so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they fell all of them by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions did I unto them ; and I hid my face from them.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel ; and I will be jealous for my holy name. And they shall bear their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they shall dwell securely in their land, and none shall make them afraid ; when I have brought them again from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, in that I caused them to go into captivity among the nations, and have gathered them unto their own land ; and I will leave none of them any more there ; neither will I hide my face any more from them : for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

**Chaps. 38, 39.** The last conflict of the world with God, and the complete overthrow of the former. It is a gathering together of the enemies of Jehovah to make their last effort, and to be overthrown. The seer passes now to the final struggle between Good and Evil, and the triumphant establishment of the Divine rule. It is the same struggle which is depicted in the Book of Revelation (20 : 7-10),

where John adopts words and phrases of Ezekiel, indicating thereby that he is predicting the same event which Ezekiel had foretold.

There are four main divisions of this prophecy : 38 : 4-13, describing Gog's march on a peaceable and unoffending people ; 38 : 14-23, his punishment ; 39 : 1-16, the completion of his ruin ; 39 : 17-29, the issue of Gog's ruin in Israel's redemption and sanctification. Each

division, however, is broken up like a poem into stanzas, where the subject is from time to time reintroduced and treated with variety, while the same phrases recur, giving force and unity to the whole. B. C.

These two chapters are essentially one in their subject-matter and aim, and are closely connected with chaps. 34, 36 and 37 preceding, and with chaps. 40-48 following. They are manifestly part of the series of prophecies recorded in the three preceding chapters—refer to the same great future of Zion, and are in the same sense general rather than specific in their ultimate meaning. The one great truth which they teach is expressed forcibly by Isaiah (54 : 17, 18). "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." "Behold, they shall gather together (*i.e.*, against thee), but not *by Me* ; whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake." H. C.

The predictions of Ezekiel respecting Gog present many difficulties ; but one thing we may at least say, that they have not yet been fulfilled. Whether by Gog we are to understand an enemy distinct from the Antichrist who wars against the Church, or that the Antichrist is here described in his special relations to the Jewish people, it is impossible to say ; but the manner of his destruction and the national blessedness that follow it seem to point to one and the same chief and last enemy. *Andreas.*

**2-6.** "Meshech and Tubal," the countries of the Moschi and the Tibareni, lay on the south of the Caspian, the home of the people known by the ancient Greeks as the Scythians. Josephus (*Antiquities* 1 : 6 : 1) says that "Magog, second son of Japheth (Gen. 10 : 2), founded those who were called by the Greeks Scythians." "Gomer," named first of the sons of Japheth (Gen. 10 : 2), probably the father and founder of the Cimmerians, helped to swell the great Scythian horde. "Tagarmah" was a kindred tribe, thought by some to be the Armenians. Persia, Ethiopia and Libya are named here with them to fill out the representation of an immense and countless horde. These names do not occur again. H. C.

**8.** This verse does not speak of the punishment and overthrow of Gog's army, but of their attack upon Israel ; but as Gog was drawn on to this attack in order to his ultimate ruin, his preparations and his advance were in truth the first step in his visitation from the Al mighty.

*After many days.* Many a long day shall the hand of God be upon thee, drawing thee on to

thy ruin, and in the latter days shalt thou come. B. C.

**11-17.** The points made here are not intricate. Shall not these combined nations know their time for assault on my defenceless people ? They will. They are to come from the northern parts, analogous to the avalanche from Northern Europe that overran the old and effete Roman empire ; or in later times, the sweep of the Tartar hordes under Tamerlane. It should be "in the latter days," here quite indefinite and very probably referring in part, perhaps in large part, to events yet future. Verse 17 intimates that this onslaught upon the kingdom and people of God is the same which His prophets had predicted in years then past. Since no prophet up to that time had named precisely these enemies, we are compelled (as above indicated) to give these names a general and not specific sense, accounting them to represent not those nations in particular, but any and every form of hostility to the kingdom of God. Only in this sense could it be said to have been the burden of previous prophecy. In the clause, "In those days *many* years," the word "*many*" is superfluous, the sense being, "in those days and years." H. C.

**17.** Gog is not mentioned by name in any existing prophecy before Ezekiel's time. The reference here shows (1) that the conflict with Gog does not represent a particular event, but one of which the prophets in general had to speak ; (2) that in the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy we are to look beyond special fulfilments. Events in the world's history come within a prophet's ken as parts of the Divine administration whereby evil struggles against but is overcome by good. As every such conflict is a prelude to the final struggle, so its prediction has reference ultimately to the consummation here foretold. B. C.

**19-23.** The visible creation takes part in this great catastrophe. A dreadful scene of confusion ensues, and ruin bursts forth from every side upon the head of sinners. In fierce bewilderment they draw their swords one upon another. All conceivable plagues work together for their destruction, and so Jehovah is manifested as the Holy God. *Hävernick.*

**19.** *Jealousy* in Hebrew is literally "a glowing fire," from a root meaning deep red. It is one of the most fruitful of Old Testament ideas in relation to the reconciliation of man to God. It is two-sided. The fire of love has for its obverse the fire of wrath. For jealousy contends for the object of its love against every-

thing that touches either the object or the love itself. *Delitzsch*.

"My fury shall come up in my face," refers to the usual manifestations of intense excitement—a flushed countenance, the blood rushing to the head and imprinting the marks of strong feeling upon the face. The indignation of the Almighty is intensely aroused against these heathen hosts who are combined to pillage and destroy His people.

**22, 23.** The exalted purpose of God in these judgments is shown—viz., to magnify His power; to make His name great; to vindicate His holiness and His righteous justice, and to make all the nations know that He is the Lord, the glorious Ruler of all kingdoms, and the no less glorious Deliverer of His people.

**Chap. 39.** This chapter continues and closes the subject of the preceding one, expanding its descriptions and reiterating its momentous truths. H. C.

The present chapter proceeds to describe the defeat of Evil and the triumph of God and His people. We must bear in mind that Ezekiel is not predicting the invasion of an actual army, but the advance of Evil under that *figure*. So he declares the overthrow of Evil by the *figure* of a host routed and slain, and the consequent purification of a land, partially overrun and disturbed. It is the manner of Ezekiel to dwell upon the details of the *figurative acts* which he portrays, bringing them before the mind as vivid pictures, and employing, so to speak, the strongest coloring. This has led some so to rest on the picture as to forget that it is a *figure*. Thus they have searched history to find out some campaign in the land of Israel, some overthrow of invaders, on which to fix this prophecy. B. C.

**9, 10.** To measure the vastness of this grand armament and give the reader some conception of its magnitude, their weapons of war are said to have supplied fuel for all Israel seven years. Now is the time for Israel to rob and plunder those who have long robbed and plundered her. These "*weapons*" made thus prominent remind us of Isaiah's words: "No *weapon* that is formed against thee shall prosper."

**11-14.** Still further to aid the mind to conceive the vastness of this slaughter, the prophet describes the burial of their dead. It occupied seven months—seven, the round number occurring here again in its long, indefinite sense. At first all the people of the land seem to have been engaged in this work.

**17-20.** Here is another of the usual features in a description of great slaughter—a summons

to every beast and fowl, to the hyenas and vultures that delight in human flesh, to gather to this great feast prepared of God for them. Of course, this aims to fill out and heighten the description of an immense slaughter.

**21, 22.** Sublimely will the Lord Jehovah "set His glory before all the heathen" by means of this appalling destruction of their armed hosts. They shall know that this is the work of His hand, and shall see that indeed He is mighty to save His people and to avenge them on their proudest foes. The house of Israel too shall see and know God's hand. This grand display of it will suffice from this time forward and forevermore! They will never again have occasion to doubt whether God loves Zion and will defend her against whatever may assail.

**25-29.** The nearer fulfilment of verses 25, 26—the first instalment of blessings—came in the restoration from Babylon under Zerubbabel. Its subsequent instalments belong chiefly or wholly to the Gospel age, and take the form peculiar to this age—Gospel blessings. That great restoration was a pledge and symbol of all future deliverances that God would achieve for His people. The perpetuity of His favor and love is insured by the mission and work of His Spirit. "For I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel" is the unfailing guaranty and pledge of abiding and glorious prosperity to Zion (verse 29). Of course this promise looks down to the Gospel age, of which the mission of the Comforter is the grand, distinctive characteristic.

These two chapters depict the intense antagonism of the powers of evil in this world against the Church and kingdom of God. In costume Jewish, to make it readily intelligible to the people of whom Ezekiel wrote, it is yet, in thought and bearing, mainly Christian, belonging to the latter days of the reign of Satan. It does *not* show that the land of Israel (Palestine proper) shall be the battle-ground; it does *not* teach that this malign onset shall be with bows and spears and horsemen; it does not even show that Zion's enemies shall come out of "the north parts"—all these are features of costume, drapery, representation. The real truth lies under all these features, and should be carefully kept distinct from them all. This truth is that sin and Satan will assail God in the form of an assault upon His truth and His people. The conflict will be terrible. What precise form it shall assume this passage did not aim to show. The forms of Satan's onsets change from age to age. Their name is legion. It is quite in vain to speculate beforehand as to

the form they will assume in any given age, present or future. It rather behooves us to study all his wiles and never be ignorant of his devices ; but especially to rally round the banner of our King and accept His leadership in the mighty conflict. So fighting and so trusting, victory is sure to Zion, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it ! II. C.

**29.** *I have poured out My Spirit.* Compare Joel 2 : 28 ; Zech. 12 : 10 ; Acts 2 : 17. There Peter distinctly appropriates these prophecies to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the inauguration of the Church of Christ by that miraculous event. But this was the beginning of the fulfilment of these verses of the prophets. They shall find their consummation when time shall be no more. B. C.

The kingdoms of light and the kingdoms of darkness are coming into conflict every hour. Armageddon is occurring in some part of the

world every day. Wickedness always grows more wicked till it meets the sword of judgment. The devil must be either converted or crushed. Jerusalem had either to accept Christ or be razed from the face of the earth. Slavery had to be abolished by the sentiment of justice or by the cannon. Where disease has taken hold of the body there must be either a complete cure or complete corruption. That is the law of the universe ; and Jesus emphasized it in His prophecies of the "coming of the Son of man." The world is not growing better ; but millions of saved people in it, a number every year increasing, are growing better, by the grace of God implanted in their hearts. All not saved shall by the very law of their nature "grow worse and worse." We do not know whether the world as a whole will have its Armageddon, but as to individuals, cities, races, we know that they have because we have seen them, and if we live we shall continue to see them. *Interior.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XL., XLI., XLII.

- 40 : 1** In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed ; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee ; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither : declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.
- 5** And behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long, of a cubit and an handbreadth each : so he measured the thickness of the building, one reed ; and the height, one reed. Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the steps thereof ; and he measured the threshold of the gate, one reed broad : and the other threshold, one reed broad. And every lodge was one reed long, and one reed broad ; and the space between the lodges was five cubits ; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate toward the house was one reed. He measured also the porch of the gate toward the house, one reed. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits ; and the posts thereof, two cubits ; and the porch of the gate was toward the house. And the lodges of the gate eastward were three on this side, and three on that side ; they three were of one measure : and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. And he measured the breadth of the opening of the gate, ten cubits ; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits ; and a border before the lodges, one cubit on this side, and a border, one cubit on that side ; and the lodges, six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. And he measured the gate from the roof of the one lodge to the roof of the other, a breadth of five and twenty cubits ; door against door. He made also posts, threescore cubits ; and the court reached unto the post, the gate being round about. And from the forefront of the gate at the entrance unto the forefront of the inner porch of the gate were fifty cubits. And there were closed windows to the lodges, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches : and windows were round about inward : and upon each post were palm trees.
- 17** Then brought he me into the outer court, and, lo, there were chambers and a pavement, made for the court round about : thirty chambers were upon the pavement. And the pave-

ment was by the side of the gates, answerable unto the length of the gates, even the lower pavement. Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits, both on the east and on the north. And the gate of the outer court whose prospect is toward the north, he measured the length thereof and the breadth thereof. And the lodges thereof were three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate; the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And the windows thereof, and the arches thereof, and the palm trees thereof, were after the measure of the gate whose prospect is toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps: and the arches thereof were before them. And there was a gate to the inner court over against the other gate, both on the north and on the east; and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits. And he led me toward the south, and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures. And there were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And there were seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof. And there was a gate to the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an hundred cubits.

Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; and the lodges thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and there were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. And there were arches round about, five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures; and the lodges thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and there were windows therein and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. And he brought me to the north gate: and he measured it according to these measures; the lodges thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof; and there were windows therein round about: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And the posts thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps.

And a chamber with the door thereof was by the posts at the gates; there they washed the burnt offering. And in the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering. And on the one side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the gate toward the north, were two tables; and on the other side, which belonged to the porch of the gate, were two tables. Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate: eight tables, whereupon they slew the sacrifices. And there were four tables for the burnt offering, of hewn stone, a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. And the hooks, an handbreadth long, were fastened within round about: and upon the tables was the flesh of the oblation. And without the inner gate were chambers for the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate: and their prospect was toward the south: one at the side of the east gate having the prospect toward the north. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, which from among the sons of Levi come near to the Lord to minister unto him. And he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar was before the house.

Then he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; even by the steps whereby they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

¶ 1 And he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. 2 And the breadth of the entrance was ten cubits; and the sides of the entrance were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits. Then went he inward, and measured each post of the entrance, two cubits: and the entrance, six cubits; and the breadth of the entrance, seven cubits. And he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, This is the most holy place. Then he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of every side-chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side. And the side-chambers were in three stories, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which belonged to the house for

the side-chambers round about, that they might have hold *therein*, and not have hold in the  
 7 wall of the house. And the side-chambers were broader as they encompassed *the house*  
 higher and higher ; for the encompassing of the house went higher and higher round about  
 the house ; therefore the breadth of the house *continued* upward ; and so one went up *from*  
 8 the lowest *chamber* to the highest by the middle *chamber*. I saw also that the house had a  
 great basement round about ; the foundations of the side-chambers were a full reed of six  
 9 great cubits. The thickness of the wall, which was for the side-chambers, on the outside,  
 was five cubits ; and that which was left was the place of the side-chambers that belonged to  
 10 the house. And between the chambers was a breadth of twenty cubits round about the  
 11 house on every side. And the doors of the side-chambers were toward *the place* that was  
 left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south ; and the breadth of the  
 12 place that was left was five cubits round about. And the building that was before the separate  
 place at the side toward the west was seventy cubits broad ; and the wall of the building  
 13 was five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. So he measured  
 the house, an hundred cubits long ; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls  
 14 thereof, an hundred cubits long ; also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate  
 place toward the east, an hundred cubits.  
 15 And he measured the length of the building before the separate place which was at the  
 back thereof, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred  
 16 cubits ; and the inner temple, and the porches of the court ; the thresholds, and the closed  
 windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the threshold,  
 cieled with wood round about, and *from* the ground up to the windows ; now the windows  
 17 were covered ; *to the space* above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by  
 18 all the wall round about within and without, by measure. And it was made with cherubim  
 and palm trees ; and a palm tree was between cherub and cherub, and every cherub had two  
 19 faces ; so that there was the face of a man toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face  
 of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side : *thus was it* made through all the  
 20 house round about. From the ground unto above the door were cherubim and palm trees  
 21 made ; thus was the wall of the temple. As for the temple, the door posts were squared ;  
 and as for the face of the sanctuary, the appearance *thereof* was as the appearance of the *tem-*  
 22 *ple*. The altar was of wood, three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits ; and the  
 corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood ; and he said  
 23 unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord. And the temple and the sanctuary had  
 24 two doors. And the doors had two leaves *apiece*, two turning leaves ; two leaves for the one  
 25 door, and two leaves for the other. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple,  
 cherubim and palm trees, like as were made upon the walls ; and there were thick beams  
 26 of wood upon the face of the porch without. And there were closed windows and palm  
 trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch : thus were the side-  
 chambers of the house, and the thick beams.

12 : 1 Then he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north ; and he  
 brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was over  
 2 against the building toward the north. Before the length of an hundred cubits was the north  
 3 door, and the breadth was fifty cubits. Over against the twenty *cubits* which belonged to  
 the inner court, and over against the pavement which belonged to the outer court, was gal-  
 4 lery against gallery in the third story. And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits  
 5 breadth inward, a way of one cubit ; and their doors were toward the north. Now the upper  
 chambers were shorter : for the galleries took away from these, more than from the lower  
 6 and the middlemost, in the building. For they were in three stories, and they had not pil-  
 lars as the pillars of the courts ; therefore *the uppermost* was straitened more than the lowest  
 7 and the middlemost from the ground. And the wall that was without by the side of the  
 chambers, toward the outer court before the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits.  
 8 For the length of the chambers that were in the outer court was fifty cubits ; and, lo, before  
 9 the temple were an hundred cubits. And from under these chambers was the entry on the  
 10 east side, as one goeth into them from the outer court. In the thickness of the wall of the  
 court toward the east, before the separate place, and before the building, there were cham-  
 11 bers. And the way before them was like the appearance of *the way* of the chambers which  
 were toward the north ; according to their length so was their breadth ; and all their goings  
 12 out were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors. And according to  
 the doors of the chambers that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way,  
 13 even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. Then said  
 he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place,  
 they be the holy chambers, where the priests that are near unto the Lord shall eat the most  
 holy things : there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meal offering, and the sin  
 14 offering, and the guilt offering ; for the place is holy. When the priests enter in, then shall  
 they not go out of the holy place into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments  
 wherein they minister ; for they are holy ; and they shall put on other garments, and shall  
 approach to that which pertaineth to the people.  
 15 Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth by the  
 16 way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about. He measured  
 on the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed  
 17 round about. He measured on the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed



18 round about. He measured on the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed, 19 He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed, 20 He measured it on the four sides: it had a wall round about, the length five hundred, and the breadth five hundred to make a separation between that which was holy and that which was common.

#### CHAPS. 40-48. THE VISION OF THE RESTORED TEMPLE AND THE REINHABITED LAND.

A DEVELOPMENT of the promise contained in 37:27. The subject of the closing chapters of Ezekiel is the restitution of the kingdom of God. This is expressed by a vision, in which are displayed not only a rebuilt temple, but also by a reformed priesthood, reorganized services, a restored monarchy, a reapportioned territory, a renewed people, and, as a consequence, the diffusion of fertility and plenty over the whole earth. The return from Babylon was indeed the beginning of this work, but only a beginning, introductory to the future kingdom of Christ, first upon earth, finally in heaven. The vision must therefore be viewed as strictly *symbolical*; the symbols employed being the Mosaic ordinances. These ordinances had indeed in themselves a hidden meaning. The tabernacle in the midst of the tents of the tribes, and afterward the Temple in the capital of the land of inheritance, was intended to signify the dwelling of Jehovah among His people; the priesthood was to denote the mediation between God and man; the monarchy, the sovereignty of God; the people, the saints of God; the territory, their inheritance. So that the symbols here employed have an essential propriety, yet they are truly *symbols*, and as such are they to be regarded. B. C.

These chapters are the more to be regarded, because the two last chapters of the Revelation seem to have a plain allusion to them, as Rev. 20 has to the foregoing prophecy of Gog and Magog. Here is the vision of a glorious temple (in this chapter and chaps. 41 and 42), of God's taking possession of it (chap. 43), orders concerning the priests that are to minister in this temple (chap. 44), the division of the land, what portion should be allotted for the sanctuary, what for the city, and what for the prince, both in his government of the people and his worship of God (chap. 45), and further instructions for him and the people (chap. 46). After the vision of the holy waters, we have the borders of the holy land, and the portions assigned to the tribes, and the dimensions and gates of the holy city (chaps. 47, 48). The general scope of it I take to be: 1. To assure the captives that they should not only return to their own land, and be settled there, which

had been often promised in the foregoing chapters, but that they should have, and therefore should be encouraged to build, another temple, which God would own, and where He would meet them and bless them. 2. To direct them to look further than all this, and to expect the coming of the Messiah, who had before been prophesied of under the name of David, because He was the man that projected the building of the temple, and that should set up a spiritual temple, even the Gospel Church, the glory of which should far exceed that of Solomon's Temple, and which should continue to the end of time. The dimensions of these visionary buildings being so large (the new temple more spacious than all the old Jerusalem, and the New Jerusalem greater than all the land of Canaan) plainly intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that these things cannot be literally, but must be spiritually understood. And the Gospel temple, erected by Christ and His apostles, was so closely connected with the second material temple, was erected so carefully just at the time when that fell into decay, that it might be ready to receive its glories when it resigned them, that it was proper enough that they should both be referred to in one and the same vision. Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, is foreshown the spiritual worship that should be performed in Gospel times, more agreeably to the nature both of God and man; and that perfected at last in the kingdom of glory, in which perhaps these visions will have their full accomplishments; and some think in some happy and glorious state of the Gospel Church on this side heaven, in the latter days. H.

In this long section Ezekiel foretells the consummation of Israel's hopes under the figures of a restored nation, a new and symmetrical division of the Holy Land among the Twelve Tribes, a rebuilt temple and a re-established worship. Here are the indefinite glories of the golden age conceived under the precise forms of geographical surveys, architectural specifications and ritualistic rubrics. It is hard for most readers to believe that the author has any larger thought beyond the details. But the geographical arrangements are practically impossible; and the symbolical meaning comes out clearly enough where he describes the river

which flows from the temple to make sweet the Dead Sea. The measuring tape is still used, but the figurative purpose is plain. This beautiful dream the prophet never could have thought of realizing in the parched wadies that gash through the desert mountains of Judea down to the Dead Sea. It is the River of Life which John has further spiritualized and placed in the New Jerusalem. *Bullantine.*

Fourteen years after the conquest of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, the desolation of the land, the deportation of its inhabitants, Ezekiel describes in this section the restoration of all that was lost, and gives, at the same time, in chap. 47 : 1-12, a glance into the distant future, in which from the restored Israel salvation for the whole world goes forth in fulfilment of the ancient prediction, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In the older theology it was customary to regard the whole section as a prophecy of the Christian Church. There is truth at the foundation of this view. Although the restoration of the city and the temple is first predicted, yet this special announcement rests on the general ground of the firm conviction of the living power and indestructibility of the kingdom of God, the symbol of which was the temple, according to a view pervading the whole of the Old and the New Testament. And as the prophecy reaches beyond its first fulfilment, it guarantees that within the kingdom of God life shall arise out of every death—that the old covenant cannot go down without rising again gloriously in the new. *Hengstenberg.*

Under the particulars detailed by Ezekiel, we discover the economy of a spiritual temple, which should again be filled with "the glory of the Lord coming from the East" (43 : 2, 4). *Dr. Gray.*—This concluding vision of a new city and temple was shown to Ezekiel at the close of his ministry for the consolation of his brethren, who were then commemorating by the waters of Babylon the fate of their former city and temple, which had that day been extinguished just fourteen years. But the Spirit of God, as in other prophecies on the same occasion, looked to a period beyond that event, which became evident when the Jews were restored to their land and the second temple was completed. For neither the extent and magnificence of the building nor the privileges and ministry of that temple did by any means correspond to this representation; and, in the glory of the Divine presence, it was entirely deficient: whereas the prophet here tells us,

"The Spirit took me and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house." He adds further, "And I heard Him speaking unto me out of the house; and He said unto me, The place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever" (chap. 43 : 5-7); which last circumstance of perpetual duration could not belong to any temple under the Mosaic economy, but is the peculiar attribute of that nobler dispensation to which it led. Such an interpretation of this mystical vision is agreeable to the usage of the prophets, who speak of the future dispensation under the image of a temple or city. (See Isa. 2 : 2; Zech. 6 : 12, 13.) At the conclusion of this very vision we are told that the name of the city should be, "The Lord is there" (48 : 35); a name of the same import with that given by Jeremiah to the city of Christ, "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 33 : 16). The whole vision, whatever difficulties there may be in the explication of particular parts, must be considered as a mystical representation of the Messiah's government. On this general application, that there should still be partial difficulties is exactly what ought to be expected: neither will those difficulties entirely vanish till the whole scheme is completed; for the true and accurate interpretation of all prophecy is only to be had from the accomplishment. *Bp. Bagot.*

The remaining nine chapters constitute one vision, given to the prophet in the twenty-fifth year of the Captivity—*i.e.*, about fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem. It is entirely unique in its character, yet closely connected in its leading thought and purpose with chaps. 36-39, immediately preceding. I regard this vision as an ideal representation of the glorious future of Messiah's kingdom. The *mode* of representing it corresponds with the external character of Christ's Church and kingdom under the Mosaic economy. This correspondence is natural, and should be expected. Ezekiel and his people, the exiles in Chaldaea, were familiar with no other form of Divine worship and with no other organization—no other external life for the people of God. Hence there was the same reason for using this class of symbols to represent the future kingdom of Christ as for using the Hebrew language in speaking to them, rather than the Greek, the Latin or the English—*viz.*, the fitness of using figures and symbols as well as words which the prophet and his people would readily understand. Let it be borne in mind that Ezekiel was by birth,

training and profession, a *priest*. Of course he was perfectly at home in all that pertained to the temple, the priesthood, and the prescribed forms of Mosaic worship. In the world of symbols, therefore, this was his vernacular tongue. Approximately and in general, the same may be said of the Jews of his time, his captive brethren. In the next place, let it be remembered that the people had now been in exile twenty-five years, and their beloved city in ruins fourteen; long enough to awaken anxious fears lest their people should never return, the temple never be rebuilt, and lest the Zion of their God should never rise again from its ruins. These fears are amply indicated in chap. 37: 11. To meet precisely this great fear, and to inspire a precious confidence in a future for Zion far more glorious than its past had ever been, this vision came. It describes with great minuteness (chaps. 40-43) the new temple yet to be; then the return of the glorious Shekinah to fix His abode once more in this temple, henceforward to be there perpetually (chap. 43); next the altar and its laws of worship; then, regulations for the prince and for the priests (chap. 44); then the assignment of territory for the temple, the priests, the Levites, and the adjacent city (chap. 45). Next, various ordinances for the people, and for the prince (chap. 46); then a vision of holy waters issuing from the sanctuary, and of the blessings they bear where they go; then the boundaries of their land (chap. 47); and finally the apportionment of territory to the several tribes, together with a great reservation for sacred purposes—for the temple, the priests, the Levites and the prince—all culminating in the one comprehensive fact, embodied in the name of the city, "*Jehorah Shannah*;" "*the Lord is there.*" I regard this vision as a magnificent panorama, thoroughly symbolical, and setting forth in Jewish costume and drapery the future prosperity, the order, beauty and moral power of the Church in those days when God shall dwell forever with His people by His Holy Spirit, a power unto holiness in their hearts and lives, making the institutions and agencies of the Gospel exceedingly effective for evangelizing the world and bringing the nations to know the Lord. II. C.

Each prophet has contemplated under some one particular aspect the final scene of the picture, the *latter days*. Ezekiel, the priest, sees this final consummation under the image of a temple of admirable purity of form. This sanctuary, which he describes in the nine last chapters of his book, is not a reproduction of Solo-

mon's Temple, now destroyed. It is distinguished from that by very significant differences; the ark and the mercy-seat are no longer seen in the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place; there is no golden altar in the latter; a simple table, like that around which a father gathers his children, has replaced the altar of incense. But the most remarkable feature is a stream which issues from the threshold of this new sanctuary. It is of no great depth at first; when Ezekiel crosses it in the inner court, the water only reaches to the ankles. But this mysterious stream, although receiving no tributary from without, increases visibly as it advances in its course. When Ezekiel crosses it a little lower down, the water already reaches to his knees. Further on, the water rises to his loins; and when he has passed still lower down along the river, he can no longer cross it on foot, he must swim over it. These wonderful waters seem to increase in bulk by some internal virtue of their own, and each drop possesses the strange property of becoming in its turn a spring.

The stream runs eastward toward the low plains which extend to the north of the Dead Sea. As it crosses the barren lands to the east of Jerusalem, it transforms them into fertile orchards. Fruitful trees, like those of Eden, grow upon its banks. Arrived at the valley of the Jordan, the stream crosses it, and pours itself into the Dead Sea. It is well known that this lake, saturated with salt and asphalt, cannot give life to any fish; and that its banks, covered with white saline emanations, and intersected by black streams of asphalt running down from the neighboring mountains, are almost entirely uninhabited. But the stream that issues from the sanctuary no sooner reaches the waters of this sea than it heals them. Soon the fish begin to live and multiply in them. Colonies of fishermen establish themselves upon its banks; and in these solitudes the stir of industry and social life succeeds to the stillness of death.

Some have attempted to interpret these pictures literally. They have maintained that Ezekiel intended to paint the actual temple which Israel should rebuild at the return from the Captivity. But how can we suppose he would have allowed himself to make such radical changes in the ordinances of the sanctuary established by Moses? And how could a literal river flow out of such a building? Who ever saw a stream running down from the top of a table-land, commanded by no height above it, and this stream increasing without receiving any tributary by its own inherent force? Be-

sides, are not the spiritual meanings of the modifications introduced into the ancient forms of the sanctuary sufficiently evident? The substitution of a simple table for the golden altar; the suppression of the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies—are not these expressive emblems of that perfect communion with God, in which the faithful under the new covenant may draw near to Him without restraint, and where God receives them at His table as a father does his children? The stream of healing waters which issues from the sanctuary—is it not an image of that ever-rising stream—the Word and the Spirit of the Lord—which, just so far as it effects an entrance into humanity, makes all things in it new, and becomes in every heart which receives it a living spring of new life? These fruit-trees, growing upon either bank of the river, do not they represent those beneficent institutions which ever mark the course of the Gospel in the midst of a believing population; and this Dead Sea, purified and healed, does it not typify the heathen world, that unclean sewer, becoming, by means of the life which flows from Christ, the scene of the noblest works of God?

One last touch completes the beauty of this picture. That cloud which Ezekiel had beheld in the beginning, withdrawing itself from the desecrated temple, he now sees making its solemn entry into this perfected sanctuary. God comes to dwell in the midst of His renovated temple. In fact, even while sometimes God gives up to destruction the visible institutions which have temporarily served as instruments for His work, He never abandons the work itself. He reserves to Himself the power of renewing it after each failure, under a form more spiritual and more holy. It was by means of these glorious visions that Ezekiel labored to revive the courage of the exiles, and made them fitted—them and their descendants—to preserve for some centuries longer the ancient theocratic institution, of which the mission was not yet accomplished.

The *omnipotence of the living God*—that is the idea which predominates in the whole ministry of Ezekiel. It was that which was demanded by the condition of a people in whom the sense of their weakness was in danger of becoming an overwhelming discouragement. *Godet*.

*Ezekiel's Priest Code (Chaps. 40-48) and the Pentateuch.* Taking the Law simply by itself, and the sayings of the prophets by themselves, it will be admitted that the latter mark

a progress upon the bare text of the former. Their views of the Law, as spiritual and inward; of the priesthood, as one of holiness; of circumcision, as of the heart; and of sacrifices, feasts and fasts, as not merely outward observances, unconnected with a corresponding state of mind, mark an advance on a former state of externalism. We can understand it, if the Mosaic Law had already existed; but not, if the main part of the so-called Mosaic legislation originated afterward. For, in that case, it would mark a retrogression from the more spiritual standpoint of the prophets to that Law, which yet was evidently connected with their activity.

This connection will at least not be denied in regard to Ezekiel. What has been called his "priest code" (chaps. 40-48) may be viewed as a symbolical and ideal presentation of the "New Jerusalem"—the form of the vision being determined by the peculiar modes of thinking and the then circumstances of the prophet and the people. But even so, and still more—viewing it, from the standpoint of our discussion, as a piece of legislation—it bears reference to the Pentateuch order, and more especially to that portion of it known as the "priest code." Historically speaking, it stands, according to our opponents, midway between the Jehovist and the Deuteronomist on the one hand, and the priest code on the other. Indeed, it is said to have formed the model, and in part the kernel, of the "priest code." This is a decisive position to take up, but also one which has been proved indefensible. No other part of the controversy has been more exhaustively treated than this of the relation between Ezekiel and the priest code, whether Ezekiel looked back on the priest code, or the priest code on Ezekiel. The contention of Wellhausen is the latter; but it has been shown on conclusive evidence that Ezekiel looks back on the priest code, which, therefore, must have been prior to the prophet. But, in that case, we shall have to put the priest code a long way back, since, according to our opponents, there is the widest difference between it and the other documents in the Pentateuch, which mark a very different stage and a very different date from the priest code. In proof that Ezekiel had known the priest code, Hoffmann quotes not fewer than eighty-one passages from the priest code which have exact verbal parallels in eighty-three passages in Ezekiel. These prove, even if we were to make some deductions from them, that the one document must have referred to the other. And this is further

confirmed by the peculiar use of a particle ("when"), which only in the priest code in the Pentateuch, and, with few isolated exceptions, only in Ezekiel, is placed after the subject which it determines. In evidence that Ezekiel had derived all this from the priest code, and not the reverse, Hoffmann adduces these two facts: first, that Ezekiel employs a number of other expressions which occur in writings that are undoubtedly older than his prophecies, while the priest code contains no other passages in which such parallelism with other portions of Scripture occurs; and, secondly, that the priest code has merely such parallelisms to Ezekiel as occur only in the latter, but none of those which Ezekiel has in common with other writings, such as Jeremiah and Deuteronomy.

We have to submit yet another consideration, which, indeed, is not new, but will, we believe, have its due weight with those who view the subject, not so much from the technical standpoint, as from that of general considerations and common sense. Let it be remembered that the ritual portion in Ezekiel differs in many and important particulars from the laws and arrangements of the so-called priest code. We can understand such modifications by a prophet in his vision of the future, if the arrangements of the priest code had been already in existence; but a later composition by priests of a code, professedly Mosaic, which contravened the arrangements of an acknowledged prophet, seems incredible. And this the more, when we remember that, according to our opponents, the arrangements of the priest code were also inconsistent with an earlier legislation, which also professed to be Mosaic—so that the priests who, to speak plainly, foisted the priest code upon Moses, also made Moses contradict himself as well as Ezekiel. And yet it is admitted on all hands that the "redaction," which welded into one whole the various parts of which the Pentateuch is composed, displays extraordinary skill. Indeed, the dilemma becomes even more acute. Let it still be borne in mind that the difference between the earlier legislation and that of the priest code is said, on certain points, to be very great. If so, how are we to account for the introduction of the priest code as the Law of Moses, long after the differing institutions of the earlier legislation had been received as Mosaic? Or, again, if the priest code which modified the earlier legislation was the latest production, and intended to be finally binding, how is it that the priest code was not placed after Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, when they had the arranging of it? We

can understand that Deuteronomy may have been a second and popular version of the earlier Law, when, in view of the immediate entrance into the land, certain of the ordinances, given thirty-eight years before, had to be modified, or, rather, adapted to the new circumstances of the people. But we cannot imagine the publication by the later priesthood of a code professedly Mosaic, by the side of one more ancient, and also professedly Mosaic, which taught differently. Why retain the older code at all, after it had become antiquated for so long a time? why call it Mosaic? why insert it in the Pentateuch? If the priests were able to introduce such an entirely new code, in which the privileges of their order and other arrangements were so much more emphasized than in the old legislation, why retain the latter, and insert it into the canon? or why should Ezra, for example, have read it in the hearing of all the people—or, did he read it?—and why should he have told them that the Exile had been the punishment of their transgression of the Mosaic ordinances, when, according to our opponents, he was himself bringing in a new code, on many points inconsistent with the old one? Such questions might easily be multiplied. A. E.

It is evident that Ezekiel's description differs too widely from the past to allow the supposition that it is historical; and written at a time when the temple lay in ashes and the land desolate, it cannot refer to the present. It must then have reference to the future. The presumption is certainly that it portrays an ideal future, because the whole was seen "in the visions of God" (40:2), an expression which Ezekiel always applies to a symbolic representation rather than to an actual image of things. (Cf. 1:1; 8:3; 11:24; 43:3.) Moreover, if it is to be literally understood, it must portray a state of things to be realized either in the near future, or else at a time still in advance of our own day. If the former, as is supposed by a few commentators, it is plain that the prophecy was never fulfilled, and remains a monument of magnificent purposes unaccomplished. The attempt to explain this by the theory that the returning exiles found themselves too few and feeble to carry out the prophet's whole designs, and therefore concluded to postpone them altogether to a more convenient season, must be regarded as an entire failure. For one of two suppositions must be adopted, both of them leading to the same result: either that of the negative critics—that certain great features of the Mosaic law, such as the

distinction between the priests and Levites and the general priestly legislation, had their origin with Ezekiel; and in this case it is inconceivable that, while adopting this, no attention should have been paid to the authority of this great prophet in other matters; or else we must accept the commonly received view, that the Mosaic law was earlier, and is here profoundly modified by Ezekiel. In the latter case, however much the returning exiles might have been disappointed in their circumstances, yet if they understood the prophet literally, they must have looked forward to the accomplishment of his designs in the future, and would naturally have been anxious to order the restored theocracy on his plan, as far as they could, from the first, to avoid the necessity of future changes; and a large part of the scheme, such as the cycle of the feasts, the ordering of the sacrifices, etc., was quite within their power. In either case, if the vision is to be taken literally, it is inexplicable that there should be no reference to it in the historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, which all relate to this period, and describe the return and settlement in the land, and the rebuilding of the temple. *F. Gardiner.*

[Professor Gardiner then refers to "statements which admit of definite tests in regard to their literalness." Among these are the immense dimensions and relative positions of the temple and city; the description of the "oblation," as physically impossible; "the division of the land among the tribes, the assignment to the priests and Levites of large landed estates, the enormous size of the temple precincts and of the city, with the small allotment of land for its support—all singular and entirely destitute of either historical precedent or subsequent realization;" the physical impossibility of a literal interpretation to the description of the waters issuing from the temple. He adds that the whole vision is so intimately bound together that objections against one part lie also against the whole. And he concludes this point as follows. B.]

Ezekiel's purpose was so far understood by his contemporaries that they never made any attempt to carry out his descriptions in the rebuilding of the temple and the reconstruction of the State. The idea of a literal interpretation of his words was reserved for generations long distant from his time, from the forms of the Church under which he lived, and from the circumstances and habits of expression with which he was familiar, and under the influence of which he wrote. *Gardiner.* (*See Jour. Soc.*

*city of Bib. Literature and Exegesis*, 1881, pp. 172-205.)

**Chap. 40.** There seems to be no occasion for extended comments on this description of the temple. Let it suffice to suggest to the reader the remarkable regularity and uniformity of dimensions that prevailed throughout, indicating, we must suppose, the beautiful order that shall prevail under the final triumph of the Gospel in our world. Then everything will be in its place; whatever is shapeless, rude, uncouth, will be discarded; all will be morally right, and the whole external world will be in beautiful harmony with the perfect moral order and purity that will then rule in human hearts and in all society.

**Chap. 41.** This continued description embraces the most holy place; the chambers also, and the altar, pointed out to the prophet particularly as the table of the Lord, with frequent allusions to the ornamentation of these apartments and walls by means of engraving upon them figures of palm trees and cherubim. The same wonderful regularity obtains here as in the previous chapter, and with the same significance.

**Chap. 42: 1-20.** The point of chief and special interest in this part of the description is the manifest care taken and the arrangements made to isolate holy things from profane, as if to guard henceforward forever against debasing the worship of God and against all contamination of God's people by contact with sin and its temptations. Thus (verses 13, 14) the priests have special chambers, where none but themselves may eat the most holy things. Their sacred ministrations are to be performed in holy garments, to be laid off when they come before the people. Verses 15-20 describe an area outside the holy place enclosed by a wall, designed to "make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place." It may fitly be noticed that while the temple proper corresponded precisely in dimensions with that built by Solomon, this wall-enclosed area was vastly larger—viz., a square of *five hundred* reeds, or nearly one English mile on each side—"considerably larger than the whole area of the city of Jerusalem, its temple included!" This fact goes far to show that this temple and its surroundings were simply *ideal*; seen in vision only, and never designed to be developed into actual reality. Taken ideally, its significance is obvious and pertinent, and is forcibly expressed. So carefully and jealously will God guard His church in the future days against being contaminated with sin. Once

redeemed and sanctified unto Christ and holiness, they will be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Blessed truth ! Obviously, in the nature of the case, this must be one of the grand features of the millennial age—the Church preserved from relapsing into worldliness and kept near to God. What is in-

dispensable in the nature of the case to a glorious millennial state, it is pleasant to find specially indicated here in this figurative vision II. C.

The reader who is interested in the detail of this temple vision is referred to the Bible (or Speaker's) Commentary, pp. 160-184. B.

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XLIII., XLIV.

- 43:1** AFTERWARD he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east : and behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east : and his voice was like the sound of many waters : and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city : and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar : and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. And the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court ; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house ; and a man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, *this is* the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever : and the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, and by the carcases of their kings *in* their high places ; in their setting of their threshold by my threshold, and their door post beside my door post, and there was *but* the wall between me and them ; and they have defiled my holy name by their abominations which they have committed : wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. Thou, son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities : and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known unto them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof, and write it in their sight : that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house : upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.
- And these are the measures of the altar by cubits : (the eubit is a cubit and an hand-breadth :) the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about a span : and this shall be the base of the altar. And from the bottom upon the ground to the lower settle shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit ; and from the lesser settle to the greater settle shall be four cubits, and the breadth a cubit. And the upper altar shall be four cubits ; and from the altar hearth and upward there shall be four horns. And the altar hearth shall be twelve *cubits* long by twelve broad, square in the four sides thereof. And the settle shall be fourteen *cubits* long by fourteen broad in the four sides thereof ; and the border about it shall be half a cubit ; and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about ; and the steps thereof shall look toward the east.
- And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God : These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. Thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which are near unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock for a sin offering. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about : thus shalt thou cleanse it and make atonement for it. Thou shalt also take the bullock of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary. And on the second day thou shalt offer a he-goat without blemish for a sin offering ; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock. When thou hast made an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. And thou shalt bring them near before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the LORD. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin offering : they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and purify it : so shall they consecrate it. And when they have accomplished the days, it shall be that upon the eighth day, and forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings ; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God.

44:1 Then he brought me back the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. And the Lord said unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it, for the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince, he shall sit therein as prince to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the way of the same. Then he brought me the way of the north gate before the house; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord: and I fell upon my face. And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God: O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought in aliens, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to profane it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, to add unto all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things; but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. Thus saith the Lord God, No alien, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any alien that is among the children of Israel. But the Levites that went far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray from me after their idols; they shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house, and ministering in the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and became a stumblingblock of iniquity unto the house of Israel; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto me, to execute the office of priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, unto the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame, and all their abominations which they have committed. Yet will I make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me; and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God: they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge. And it shall be that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whilst they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen tires upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat. And when they go forth into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they minister, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments, that they sanctify not the people with their garments. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away; but they shall take virgins of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that is the widow of a priest. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in a controversy they shall stand to judge; according to my judgements shall they judge it: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, into the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord God. And they shall have an inheritance; I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. They shall eat the meal offering, and the sin offering, and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. And the first of all the first-fruits of every thing, and every oblation of every thing, of all your oblations, shall be for the priests: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, to cause a blessing to rest on thine house. The priests shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself, or is torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

**Chap. 43.** The visible glory of God returns to dwell in this new temple (verses 1-4); the Lord states to the people the conditions on which He will dwell with them (verses 5-11); the altar is measured and its ordinances of worship described (verses 12-27). H. C.

**1-11.** The consecration of the new temple. The glory of the God of Israel must take pos-

session of the new sanctuary, as, in time past, of the tabernacle and of Solomon's Temple. But it is in a different form. The glory was of old veiled in a cloud resting on the mercy seat of the ark between cherubim of carved wood, lifeless and motionless, as though the mercy and power of God were, in some sort, restricted to the material building and the peo-



ple to whom it belonged. Now the glory appears in the form with which Ezekiel is familiar, in all its symbolical significance, with light shining upon the earth, living creatures, wheels connecting heaven with earth so that the chariot looks and moves to every quarter, the firmament and the rainbow, the appearance of a man upon the throne, and His voice speaking to the children of men. A personal and living God enters the sanctuary, condescending to occupy it, not merely as a fixed dwelling-place, but as a centre from whence His power and mercy radiate freely to the utmost ends of the earth. Hence amid the detailed preparations of the house no mention is made of ark or mercy seat, so important a part in the former sanctuary (and indeed, in the temple of Zerubabel no ark was placed). The living cherubim, the firmament, and the rainbow of mercy replace the cherubic figures and the golden chest.

**2.** Jehovah had before left the house to destruction, because it had been polluted and profaned (11 : 22). He now returns to take possession of His holy habitation, prepared and sanctified for His reception. B. C.

**4, 5.** Again, approaching from the north, the prophet in vision is impressed with a sense of the glory of Jehovah as filling His temple, and he falls upon his face in profound adoration. This case anticipates the great truth brought out so distinctively at the close of this entire vision, which indeed is the central thought throughout—viz., *that God dwells among His people by His spiritual presence and glory*. The name of the whole city shall be, "*The Lord is there*." This being chief in importance, gave name to the city. Now the Lord solemnly charges the prophet to mark well ("set his heart upon") all he was about to say in respect to the modes of worship in this temple and in respect to entering and leaving it. H. C.

**5.** *Behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.* The glory, or the symbol of the Divine presence, entered into the temple and settled there, as it did when it was finished by Solomon (1 K. 8 : 10, 11). W. Loeth.

**7.** *The place of My throne.* Here is the place of my throne, etc. The cherubim were God's throne, from whence He is said to sit between the cherubim, and the ark was His footstool (Ps. 99 : 1, 5). Calmet.

*Where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.* This promise is to be understood like those formerly made upon the condition of their obedience, but it is eminently

fulfilled in Christ, in whom all the prophecies of the Old Testament are to have their final accomplishment. Zechariah prophecies of the Messiah (chap. 6 : 13), that "He should build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory;" that is, He shall build the Christian Church; "in him shall all the fulness of the Godhead dwell bodily," and really, not in types and figures. (See Heb. 3 : 3; Matt. 16 : 18; John 1 : 14; Col. 2 : 9.) There was no visible Shekinah or glory in the second temple till the Lord, whom they expected, "came to His temple" (Mal. 3 : 1)—that is, till the Messiah, who was "the brightness of His Father's glory," appeared there, and made it an illustrious figure of that true church or temple of believers, where He would continue His presence forever (2 Cor. 6 : 16). (W. Loeth.) Bp. Hall.

**5-11.** The allusion to the "place of His throne" (verses 7, 8), and to their kings as having defiled God's sanctuary by setting up idol gods there, looks to Manasseh. (See 2 K. 21 : 4-7.) These verses are specially valuable as revealing the conditions on which alone the Lord would return and continue to dwell among His people. They *must*—absolutely *must* put away their sins and be ashamed of their iniquities. If they consented heartily to these conditions, the prophet was to show them the form of the house, and all that the Lord had revealed of this new temple, and of its ordinances of worship as a pledge of His own restoring mercy and His return to dwell among them. This was specially pertinent to the exiles among whom the prophet lived, and shows that the Lord designed this vision to bear vigorously upon the hearts of that people then and there.

**12.** This temple stood on a mountain. So did that of Solomon, though this appears to have been the loftier one. The whole area of this mountain top was most holy as being the place where the Lord Jehovah truly dwelt. The subsequent verses of this chapter describe the great altar, and give the ordinances to regulate the sacrifices upon it. H. C.

**Chap. 44.** The relation of the different classes of people to the temple and its courts. The position of the prince (verses 1-3). Admonition to ministering priests, grounded upon former neglect (verses 4-16). Regulations as to the priests' services. The garments of the priests are defined and various rules prescribed in the Law are repeated, with some additions in order to denote additional care to avoid uncleanness (verses 17-27). Provision for the priests and Levites (verses 28-31). B. C.

**7, 9.** Strangers residing in Israel, but of uncircumcised heart, must by no means be permitted to enter the Lord's sanctuary. The Levites who had apostatized into idolatry must bear the punishment of this great iniquity. They were forbidden to come near before the Lord, but were assigned to the more remote and less hallowed and honored services of the sanctuary. They were to minister in the presence of their more favored brethren, the priests, as their servants; but might not come specially near to the Lord. To the sons of Zadok who had not thus apostatized was assigned the distinguished honor of coming near to minister before the very presence of the Divine majesty. This discrimination had a most significant and earnest moral bearing. "Holiness becometh God's house forever." The favored ones there are the men of lowly heart who live near to God, walking softly before Him. II. C.

The argument *ex silentio* can be only of limited application in regard to historical books, fully occupied as they are with other matters, and only occasionally and incidentally alluding to existing ecclesiastical laws and customs; but it is plainly of great importance in this prophetic setting forth of quite a full and detailed ecclesiastical scheme. The omission of references to any ritual law or feast or ceremony in the historical books can occasion no surprise, and afford no just presumption against the existence of such rites and ceremonies, unless some particular reason can be alleged why they should have been mentioned; but a corresponding omission from the pages of Ezekiel is good evidence either that the thing omitted was too familiar to require mention, or else that he purposely excluded it from his scheme. In other words, it shows that what he omits, as compared with the Mosaic Law, was either already entirely familiar to him and to the people; or else that the law he sets forth was, in these particulars, different from the Mosaic Law. To illustrate by an example: there can be no question that circumcision was a fundamental rite of the religion of the Israelites, practised in all ages of their history; yet, after the Pentateuch and the few first chapters of Joshua, there is no mention of it, and the words *circumcise*, *circumcised*, *circumcision*, do not occur in the sacred literature down to the time of Jeremiah; neither is there any allusion to circumcision in Ezekiel, except the mention of the stranger "uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh" (44: 7, 9). Of course the reason for this, in both cases, is that the law of circumcision was so familiar and the practice

so universal that there was no occasion for its mention. On the other hand, the fast of the day of atonement is not mentioned either in the historical books or in Ezekiel. We are not surprised at its omission from the former, nor can this cast any shade of doubt on its observance, unless some passage can be shown in which it would have been likely to be spoken of; but we can only account for its being passed over in the cycle of the festivals in Ezekiel on the supposition that it formed no part of his scheme, while yet there are indications that he recognizes it, in his other arrangements, as existing in his time. *F. Gardiner.*

**17-19.** Outward purity symbolizes inward; the purity of the person that of the heart. Hence linen rather than woollen garments were prescribed. Sweat, as indicating impurity, must be avoided. Special garments were assigned to be worn exclusively before the Lord, to be exchanged for others when they came before the people. The last clause of verse 19 means, they shall not sanctify the people ministering in their ordinary garments, but only while wearing their sacred vestments.

**23.** Under the ancient economy, the ceremonial distinction between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean, had the high moral purpose of training the mind to recognize the distinction between holiness and sin. This same distinction it must be the great duty of God's servants in the millennial age to teach and to enforce.

**24.** Under the law given through Moses, the distinction recognized in modern times between civil and religious statutes was scarcely known. The priests and Levites were then judges of civil cases. (See De. 17: 8-13; 2 Chron. 19: 8-11.) Hence naturally the same system obtains here.

**25-27.** No form of ceremonial uncleanness was accounted more flagrant than that which comes from contact with a dead body, or near approach to one. Hence promiscuous mourning for the dead and attendance upon these funeral solemnities were strictly forbidden to the priests, the law defining by name the near relatives for whom they might mourn. The same reason is here, to indicate the moral purity which will characterize the future kingdom of the Messiah.

**28.** They were to have subsistence from the altar and from the tithes which the law prescribed. Beyond this they had no inheritance. From landed estates the Lord purposely debarred them. This was also the doctrine of the ancient Mosaic system. II. C.

To describe the priests of his day as "the sons of Zadok" is no proof that Ezekiel did not recognize, or was ignorant of, their more ancient designation as "the sons of Aaron." But the prophet makes this clearer by the reason which he gives for continuing to them the honor bestowed on their father in David's reign: "The priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God" (verse 15). For faithfulness to their charge, then, they were to be retained in the place of high honor they had well guarded for centuries. A higher place they could not attain to. Nothing more noble was possible for them than to keep, with Jehovah's approval, the position originally assigned to them. Not to have forfeited their rights was all that could be said. But it was different with "the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from Me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity" (verse 10). Manifestly these Levites were like Korah in the wilderness, "seeking the priesthood also." But their usurpation of the priest's office was punished, *first*, by a sharp reminder of the lower rank they held; and, *second*, by a renewal of the wilderness exclusion of them from the priesthood. For the prophet proceeds: "And they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house. And they shall not come near unto Me, to do the office of a priest unto Me, nor to come near to any of My holy things, in the most holy place." Misconduct on the part of the Levites in past ages made necessary a clear definition of their rank and duties in the new temple that was to be built. That definition was delivered by Ezekiel in words and phrases so startlingly the same as those of the Law given in the wilderness, that, if he had not the Pentateuch before him as we now read it, it will be difficult to attain to certainty in any historical matter whatever. There is not a shadow of reason for attributing to Ezekiel the invention of these words and phrases. If Moses was not the first utterer of them, we are in hopeless uncertainty

about a matter which otherwise seems clear as noonday. The Levites said Ezekiel, "shall not come near unto Me to do the office of a priest unto Me," as they attempted to do for ages "when Israel went astray." But what are these words of the prophet save a copy, or a singularly clear echo, of those spoken in the wilderness: "The censers of these sinners against their own souls" shall be "a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense," the peculiar duty of the priests in the holy place (Num. 16: 38-40; 2 Chron. 26: 16).

There remains another historical coincidence to be pointed out in connection with these statements of Ezekiel. With a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired, he lets us understand that the priests remained at their post, "in charge of My sanctuary," "when Israel went astray." Although he is speaking of "the sons of Zadok" as those whose relation to the high priesthood specially singled them out for mention, it is clear from his writings that a part of the priestly family is here standing for the whole. They did not desert the temple, however much their rights and revenues may have been curtailed. But the same praise is not given to the Levites; "they are gone away far from Me." They abandoned their posts precisely as their successors did in the days of Nehemiah, a century and more after Ezekiel's time. But there is historical evidence which confirms this forsaking of their duty by the Levites, "when Israel went astray." No mention whatever is made of their desertion in the Book of Kings. The first discovery of it is given by the chronicler in narrating the overthrow of Athaliah. Jehoiada, the high-priest, and a son of Zadok, is seen at his post as chief keeper of the temple during the dreary six years of her tyranny. But the Levites had fled; they required to be "gathered out of all the cities of Judah;" and even after the priest had succeeded in his plans, the same Levites were coldly indifferent to the duty of repairing the neglected temple (2 Chron. 23: 2; 24: 5, 6). Read in the light of Ezekiel's prophecies, these statements of the chronicler are a valuable and an undesigned proof of the historical value of his writings. *Sime.*

## EZEKIEL, CHAPTERS XLV., XLVI.

**45 : 1** MOREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land : the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand *reebs*, and the breadth shall be ten thousand ; it shall be holy in all the 2 border thereof round about. Of this there shall be for the holy place five hundred *in length* by five hundred *in breadth*, square round about ; and fifty cubits for the suburbs thereof 3 round about. And of this measure shalt thou measure, a length of five and twenty thousand, 4 and a breadth of ten thousand : and in it shall be the sanctuary, which is most holy. It is an holy portion of the land ; it shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, which come near to minister unto the LORD ; and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy 5 place for the sanctuary. And five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth, shall be unto the Levites, the ministers of the house, for a possession unto them- 6 selves, for twenty chambers. And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, side by side with the oblation of the holy portion : 7 it shall be for the whole house of Israel. And *whatsoever is for the prince shall be on the one side and on the other side of the holy oblation and of the possession of the city, in front of the holy oblation and in front of the possession of the city, on the west side westward, and on the east side eastward ; and in length answerable unto one of the portions, from the west* 8 *border unto the east border.* In the land it shall be to him for a possession in Israel : and my princes shall no more oppress my people ; but they shall give the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

9 Thus saith the Lord God : Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel : remove violence and spoil, and execute judgement and justice ; take away your exactions from my people, saith 10 11 the Lord God. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer : the measure thereof shall be after the 12 homer. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs : twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, 13 fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh. This is the oblation that ye shall offer ; the sixth part of an ephah from an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah from an 14 homer of barley : and the set portion of oil, of the bath of oil, shall be the tenth part of a 15 bath out of the cor, *which is ten baths, even an homer ; for ten baths are an homer ; and one lamb of the flock, out of two hundred, from the fat pastures of Israel ; for a meal offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make atonement for them, saith the* 16 *Lord God.* All the people of the land shall give unto this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17 And it shall be the prince's part to give the burnt offerings, and the meal offerings, and the drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel : he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meal offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.

18 Thus saith the Lord God : In the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, thou shalt take 19 a young bullock without blemish ; and thou shalt cleanse the sanctuary. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put it upon the door posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner 20 court. And so thou shalt do on the seventh *day* of the month for every one that erreth, and 21 for him that is simple : so shall ye make atonement for the house. In the first *month*, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days ; unleavened 22 bread shall be eaten. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the 23 people of the land a bullock for a sin offering. And the seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the 24 seven days ; and a he-goat daily for a sin offering. And he shall prepare a meal offering, an 25 ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil to an ephah. In the seventh *month*, in the fifteenth day of the month, in the feast, shall he do the like the seven days ; according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meal offering, and according to the oil.

**46 : 1** Thus saith the Lord God : The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days ; but on the sabbath day it shall be opened, and in the day 2 of the new moon it shall be opened. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate ; 3 then he shall go forth : but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. And the people of the land shall worship at the door of that gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new 4 moons. And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD shall be in the sab- 5 bath day six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish ; and the meal offering shall be an ephah for the ram, and the meal offering for the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin 6 of oil to an ephah. And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without 7 blemish ; and six lambs, and a ram ; they shall be without blemish ; and he shall prepare a meal offering, an ephah for the bullock, and an ephah for the ram, and for the lambs accord-

- 8 ing as he is able, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And when the prince shall enter, he shall  
 9 go in by the way of the porch of the gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. But  
 when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the appointed feasts, he that en-  
 tereth by the way of the north gate to worship shall go forth by the way of the south gate ;  
 and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate ;  
 he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth straight  
 10 before him. And the prince, when they go in, shall go in in the midst of them ; and when  
 11 they go forth, they shall go forth *together*. And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meal  
 offering shall be an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs as he is  
 12 able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And when the prince shall prepare a freewill  
 offering, a burnt offering or peace offerings as a freewill offering unto the Lord, one shall open  
 for him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his  
 peace offerings, as he doth on the sabbath day ; then he shall go forth ; and after his going  
 13 forth one shall shut the gate. And thou shalt prepare a lamb of the first year without blemish  
 14 for a burnt offering unto the Lord daily : morning by morning shalt thou prepare it. And  
 thou shalt prepare a meal offering with it morning by morning, the sixth part of an ephah,  
 and the third part of an hin of oil, to moisten the fine flour ; a meal offering unto the Lord  
 15 continually by a perpetual ordinance. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meal offer-  
 ing, and the oil, morning by morning, for a continual burnt offering.  
 16 Thus saith the Lord God : If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, it is his inheri-  
 17 tance, it shall belong to his sons ; it is their possession by inheritance. But if he give of his  
 inheritance a gift to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty ; then it shall re-  
 18 turn to the prince ; but as for his inheritance, it shall be for his sons. Moreover the prince  
 shall not take of the people's inheritance, to thrust them out of their possession ; he shall  
 give inheritance to his sons out of his own possession : that my people be not scattered every  
 man from his possession.  
 19 Then he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy  
 chambers for the priests, which looked toward the north : and behold, there was a place on  
 20 the hinder part westward. And he said unto me, This is the place where the priests shall  
 boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, where they shall bake the meal offering : that they  
 21 bring them not forth into the outer court, to sanctify the people. Then he brought me forth  
 into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court ; and behold,  
 22 in every corner of the court there was a court. In the four corners of the court there were  
 courts inclosed, forty cubits long and thirty broad : these four in the corners were of one  
 23 measure. And there was a row of *building* round about in them, round about the four, and  
 24 it was made with boiling places under the rows round about. Then said he unto me, These  
 are the boiling houses, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

**Chap. 45.** The portion of territory reserved for the priests, in the middle of which is to be the temple, with its courts and precincts ; for the Levites ; for the city, and for the prince. B. C.

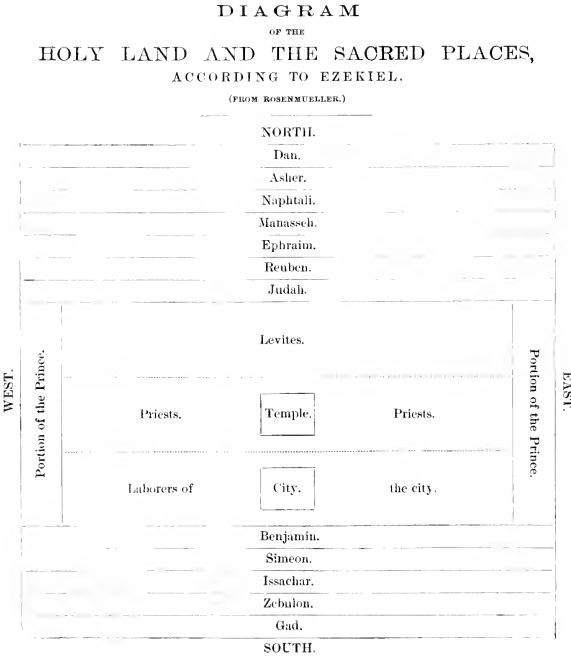
The Lord sets apart a large and well-defined portion of the land for specially sacred uses (verses 1-8) ; admonishes the princes against unjust exactions from the people, and provides a system of weights and measures (verses 9-12) ; and specifies certain religious ceremonial observances (verses 13-25).

**1-8.** In full harmony with the genius, though varying from the forms of the Mosaic system, we have here the extraordinary feature of a very large portion of the whole land—a little less than half of it—set apart for public uses, more or less sacred, the object apparently being to wall in the sacred institutions of religion so effectually as to shut off from the Church the corrupting influences of the world. As to the dimensions of this vast reserved square of twenty-five thousand reeds in length and breadth, I shall assume, in the absence of any Hebrew term for it, that this "*reel*" (verse 1) corresponds with that defined in chap. 40 : 5—

viz., six cubits and a handbreadth—*i.e.*, proximately ten and a half feet in length. This may be assumed with the greater confidence because both the measuring reed and the man who bore it are made very prominent in the opening of this vision (chap. 40 : 3, 5). There can scarcely be a doubt that the same standard of measure obtains throughout this entire vision. By this standard, the "*oblation*" will be a square of forty-nine and seventy-one hundredths miles on each side, varying only a small fraction from the average breadth of Palestine proper from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan valley. Anticipating here from chap. 48 the geographical location of the tribes, the entire allotment of the territory may be readily seen from the following diagram copied from Rosenmüller, and supposed to be proximately correct. The reader will be struck with the perfect regularity which rules throughout. The entire territory is supposed to be of uniform width—twenty-five thousand reeds (about fifty miles) ; each tribe has its own narrow belt, stretching across the entire width. Beginning at the north end, seven tribes have their portion north of the "*holy oblation*" or reserve ; then the

Levites have a very ample territory twenty miles wide on the northern part of this reserve ; and the city, with its laboring population, half as much—ten miles wide—on its southern border ; enclosing between them the territory of the priests, twenty miles wide, in the middle of which stood the temple. Spacious territory is assigned to the prince at each end of this sacred reserve. Under the Mosaic economy and in the distribution of the land of Canaan by Joshua, no provision whatever was specially made for the king or “prince.” It would then have been premature. Here it is timely, and is made prominent. The “prince” is a

prominent character in this new *régime*. The prophecies of Zechariah also foreshadow this prominence. With him, however, royalty and priesthood reside in the same glorious personage. He shall not only build the temple of the Lord, but “shall bear glory” (pre-eminent glory), and shall sit and rule upon His throne, and shall be a priest on His throne, and be crowned as both king and priest (Zech. 6 : 12, 13). This millennial state being the result of the glorious reign of the Messiah, the *Prince of Peace*, its strong points could not be presented without giving great prominence to “the prince.” H. C.



**10.** A transition to a general exhortation to justice and honesty, expressed by true weights and measures (Lev. 19 : 35 ; Prov. 11 : 1). This fitly introduces the strict regulation of quantities in the prescribed offerings.

**Chap. 46.** Having seen the temple and the city rise before him in fair proportions, having delivered the ordinance for priest and prince, the prophet is permitted to behold in vision people, priest and prince uniting in most solemn worship before the throne of God. B. C.

Here are special ordinances prescribing who may pass through the glorious eastern gate, through which the Shekinah had passed; also *when* and *how* (verses 1-3, 12); how the people may enter the temple (verses 9, 10); various ordinances in respect to "meat-offerings" to accompany the bloody sacrifices; how the prince may entail his real estate (verses 16-18); and the provision of apartments for cooking (verses 19-24).

**1-3.** Very special sacredness attached to this eastern gate, since through this gate the visible glory of the Lord entered into the most holy place. (See chap. 44 : 1-4.) Through this gate the prince and He only might enter (verses 2, 12). It was to be opened only on the Sabbath; on the days of new moon; and when the prince had occasion to present a voluntary (not specially prescribed) offering (verse 12). The significance of these points looks toward the special sacredness of the prince as one near to God, and was also intended to impress the people with the great central truth of this entire vision—viz., that in this new, holy and beautiful state of the Church, the Lord God would dwell among His people with pre-eminent manifestations of His presence. The place of His feet would be sublimely glorious.

**8-10.** Remarkably the prince was to enter the temple when the people did, and withdraw from it when they did—an ever-attending presence with the people, reminding us of the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Since in certain aspects of his character and relations this "prince" was a foreshadowing type of the Messiah, we may accept this law of his attendance with the people as implying that they should approach God's holy presence only *with* and *in* and *through* their great mediator, Christ Jesus.

**13-15.** These rules for the daily offerings differ slightly from those given through Moses (Num. 28 : 3-8). By the ancient law there were two lambs offered daily, one in the morning and the other in the evening. Here is but one,

offered each morning. May it be supposed that this looks especially to the one Lamb that was slain for us—the "one offering whereby He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10 : 14)? The meat offering to accompany it was, in Moses, the tenth part of an ephah of flour with the fourth part of a hin of oil; while here in Ezekiel the quantities are the sixth part of an ephah and the third part of a hin. The diversity shows that this new system is not an exact copy of the old; while yet in its general features it is quite analogous. H. C.

**16-18.** The prince was to be provided with possessions of his own, to prevent him from having recourse to exactions from his subjects; and lest in the course of time he might be tempted to such exactions, enactments are added to prevent the alienation of the prince's land. Inheritance was permitted only to his sons, as the father's land descended in all cases to the sons. If any gifts were to be made to his servants, they must be out of the prince's portion, and must be only temporary, reverting to the prince in the year of jubilee. On the jubilee year and the enactments concerning it see Lev. 25. B. C.

**19-24.** To impress more deeply the idea of sanctity in this temple, and all its surroundings, special provision is made for the culinary operations. The cooking is all to be done in special apartments provided for that purpose. So carefully does the Lord guard in this new representative dispensation against whatever might lessen the sacredness of Divine service and worship. H. C.

If Ezekiel thus presents the civil ruler as a representative of the people and an important factor in their temple worship, it is simply impossible that any actual legislation, influenced by his vision, should have so totally ignored "the prince," as is notoriously done in the Levitical laws. It would seem that even if the priests and the people had not insisted upon their sovereign's occupying his proper position in their worship, every pious prince would have claimed it for himself. The conclusion is obvious: the Levitical laws are older than Ezekiel, and his vision had no direct effect upon the polity of the Jewish people.

All the more important features of the vision of Ezekiel, so far as his relation to the Mosaic law is concerned, have now been passed in review. Others, such as the detailed arrangements of his temple, with its various peculiar outbuildings, and its large "precincts," etc.,

would require too much time to examine in detail, as I have elsewhere done (Com on Ezekiel in Bp. Ellicott's commentary for English readers), and would only add fresh illustrations of the fact which has been everywhere apparent. If we compare the customs of the Jews as they are known after the Exile with those which are known to have existed before, they are found perfectly to agree in everything, except negatively in so far as data are wanting to show in some respects what were the customs of the more ancient time. This deficiency was of course to be expected in dealing with matters of such antiquity, where the records we have are almost wholly occupied with other matters. Moreover, both the ancient custom as far as it was regulated by law and can be traced (making allowance for some small difficulties in understanding such very ancient legislation) and the later practice perfectly agree with the Mosaic legislation. But quite late in the history of Israel, during the Captivity in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel comes forward and in a remarkable vision sets forth a general scheme of theocratic laws and worship. His scheme presents incidentally many obvious allusions to the Levitical laws, but in its direct enactments is quite at variance with both former and later custom and also with the Mosaic law. It is in no sense, and in no point on the line of development from what existed before to what existed afterward. Yet we are asked to believe that the Levitical law only existed in a very imperfect and inchoate form before him, that he gave the great impetus to its development, and that within forty years afterward the nearly perfect scheme was accepted as their ancient law by his nation. The thing required is beyond our power. *F. Gardiner, in "Ezekiel and the Law."*

Most readers, when they have come to the 46th chapter, will have been struck with the small number of services described, and with the omission of one of the three great festivals (see 45:25), and even the Day of Atonement. Now, if we were to expect to find in the vision directions for the re-enactment of the temple ritual, this would be quite unaccountable. But if we view these selected rites in relation to the temple building, and give to that building its true symbolical character, all is found to be just and harmonious. The vision is intended to depict the perpetual worship of the

God of heaven in the kingdom of Christ. To the mind of an Israelite the proper figure to represent this would be the temple and its services, with people, priest and prince, each doing their fitting part. The most appropriate services to exhibit this worship would be those of continual recurrence, in which day by day, week by week, month by month, prayer and praise ascended to the throne of heaven. The morning sacrifice, the Sabbath and the new moon festival. Here we have the Israelite symbol of perpetual public adoration.

In other parts of this book Ezekiel points forward to the spiritual teaching of the Gospel; here to a people mourning over a ruined temple, scattered priesthood, and a captive king the seer sets forth in visions that which the last of the prophets foretold in words: *From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts (Mal. 1:11).* This will also account for the absence of all mention of the high-priest and his office. In the old dispensation the chief function of the high-priest was the performance of the great act, which typified the atonement wrought by the sacrifice and death of Christ for the sins of the world. This atonement was effected once for all upon the cross, and in the new dispensation Christ appears in the midst of His people as their Prince and Head, leading and presenting their prayers and praises day by day to His Father in heaven.

It is to be observed that the vision represents the coming dispensation as a kingdom, and in this respect has especial reference to the rule of Messiah, foretold under the name of David (34:24). We find that Solomon took a special part in the temple services as king, and here there are new and remarkable provisions for the prince. One of the gateways is reserved for him; special offerings are to be made by him. There is a particular order for the prince's inheritance; and, moreover, we note that the gate reserved for the prince is that by which *the Lord, the God of Israel, entered in (44:2)*; and thus is brought forth, as a leading feature in the vision, the figure of a king reigning in righteousness, the representative of Jehovah upon earth. B. C.



## EZEKIEL CHAPTERS XLVII., XLVIII.

**47 : 1** AND he brought me back unto the door of the house ; and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward, for the forefront of the house was toward the east : and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar. Then brought he me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of *the gate that looketh toward the east* ; and behold, there ran out waters on the right side. When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through *the waters*, waters that were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand ; *and it was* a river that I could not pass through : for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this* ? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah : and they shall go toward the sea ; into the sea *shall the waters go* which were made to issue forth ; and the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live ; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish : for these waters are come thither, and *the waters of the sea* shall be healed, and every thing shall live whithersoever the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that fishers shall stand by it : from En-gedi even unto En-gelaim shall be a place for the spreading of nets ; their fish shall be after their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marishes thereof, shall not be healed ; they shall be given up to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for meat, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail : it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for healing.

**13** Thus saith the Lord God : This shall be the border, whereby ye shall divide the land for inheritance according to the twelve tribes of Israel : Joseph shall have portions. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another ; concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers : and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. And this shall be the border of the land : on the north side, from the great sea, by the way of Hethlon, unto the entering in of Zedad ; Hamath, Berothab, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath ; Hazer-hatticon, which is by the border of Hauran. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enon at the border of Damascus, and on the north northward is the border of Hamath. This is the north side. And the east side, between Hauran and Damascus and Gilead, and the land of Israel, shall be Jordan ; from the north border unto the east sea shall ye measure. This is the east side. And the south side southward shall be from Tamar as far as the waters of Meriboth-kadesh, to the brook of Egypt, unto the great sea. This is the south side southward. And the west side shall be the great sea, from the south border as far as over against the entering in of Hamath. This is the west side. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you ; and they shall be unto you as the homeborn among the children of Israel ; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God.

**48 : 1** Now these are the names of the tribes : from the north end, beside the way of Hethlon to the entering in of Hamath, Hazar-enan at the border of Damascus, northward beside Hamath ; and they shall have their sides east and west ; Dan, one portion. And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side ; Asher, one portion. And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side ; Naphtali, one portion. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side ; Manassah, one portion. And by the border of Manassah, from the east side unto the west side ; Ephraim, one portion. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side ; Reuben, one portion. And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side ; Judah, one portion. And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the oblation which ye shall offer, five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the portions, from the east side unto the west side : and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD shall be five and twenty thousand reeds in length, and ten thousand in breadth. And for these, even for the priests, shall be the holy oblation ; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length ; and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof.

- 11 *It shall be* for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, which have kept my charge; which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.
- 12 And it shall be unto them an oblation from the oblation of the land, a thing most holy, by
- 13 the border of the Levites. And answerable unto the border of the priests, the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth; all the length shall
- 14 be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange it, nor shall the first fruits of the land be alienated; for it is holy unto the
- 15 Lord. And the five thousand that are left in the breadth, in front of the five and twenty thousand, shall be for common use, for the city, for dwelling and for suburbs; and the city
- 16 shall be in the midst thereof. And these shall be the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred.
- 17 And the city shall have suburbs; toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west
- 18 two hundred and fifty. And the residue in the length, answerable unto the holy oblation, shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward; and it shall be answerable unto the holy oblation; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that labour in the
- 19, 20 city. And they that labour in the city, out of all the tribes of Israel, shall till it. All the oblation shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare, with the possession of the city.
- 21 And the residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation and of the possession of the city, in front of the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward in front of the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, answerable unto the portions, it shall be for the prince: and the holy oblation
- 22 and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof. Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince.
- 23 And as for the rest of the tribes: from the east side unto the west side; Benjamin, one
- 24 portion. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side; Simeon,
- 25 one portion. And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side; Issachar,
- 26 one portion. And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side; Zebulun,
- 27 one portion. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side; Gad, one
- 28 portion. And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the brook of Egypt, unto the great sea.
- 29 This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their several portions, saith the Lord God.
- 30 And these are the goings out of the city: on the north side four thousand and five hundred
- 31 reeds by measure; and the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel; three gates northward: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate
- 32 of Levi, one; and at the east side four thousand and five hundred reeds; and three gates: even the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one; and at the
- 33 south side four thousand and five hundred reeds by measure; and three gates: the gate of Simeon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zebulun, one; at the west side four
- 34 thousand and five hundred reeds, with their three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of
- 35 Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one. It shall be eighteen thousand reeds round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.

**Chap. 48.** In this chapter, verses 1-12 record a precious vision of waters coming forth from under the temple; verses 13-20 give the boundaries of the land; and verses 21-23 provide for strangers who would fain affiliate with the people of God. II. C.

**1-12. The Vision of the Waters.** Ezekiel's temple, with its ritual, ministers and congregation, symbolizes the presence of Jehovah in the midst of a loyal people. The waters are the blessings which flow from this source to animate and refresh all the inhabitants of the earth. Isaiah had employed this figure. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour My spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring* (Isa. 44:3). Compare Joel 3:18, *All the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain*

*shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.* Ezekiel's description is adopted and modified by Zechariah (13:1; 14:8), and in Rev. 22. Lightfoot ("Description of the Temple," chap. 23) informs us that Hebrew tradition spoke of a spring of water, named Etham (said to be identical with the well waters of Nephtoah, Josh. 18:15), on the west of the temple, whose waters were conducted by pipes into the temple courts for the uses needed in the ministrations of the priests. The waters of Shiloah (Ps. 46:4; Isa. 8:6) flowed from the rocks beneath the temple hill. It is quite in the manner of Ezekiel's vision to start from an existing feature and thence proceed to an ideal picture whence to draw a spiritual lesson. The deepening of the waters in their course shows the continual deepening of

spiritual life and multiplication of spiritual blessings in the growth of the kingdom of God. B. C.

1. Joel and Zechariah agree with Ezekiel in declaring that this river of blessing issues from the sanctuary; John the beloved is able to show us its very fountain-head, for he points to it as "proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." *C. R. Thomas.*

The *house* is the temple itself; the waters issued from beneath the southeast corner, and flowed along the south of the porch which projected into the inner court. The *house* looking eastward, the *south* is at the *right hand*. The Mediterranean is the *hinder* sea. The source of the Gospel blessings may be traced up to the presence of God among the descendants of Abraham, which presence was expressed outwardly by the temple at Jerusalem, the seat of Jehovah, who, through the Mosaic law and ordinances, communicated His Spirit in measure to those who lived under the first covenant. In Rev. 22 : 1, *the pure river*, the spiritual blessing of the new covenant, proceeds *out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*. So long as the stream is confined to the temple courts, it is merely a small rill, for the most part unseen, but when it issues from the courts it begins at once to deepen and to widen. So on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the little company of believers, and communicated to them the *gift of tongues*, as a token that they should go forth and carry the Gospel into divers lands. The first marked step was the conversion of three thousand at the preaching of Peter (Acts 2 : 41), which was followed immediately by the organization of the infant Church in Jerusalem.

2. The *seer* passes out of the courts by the northern gates of the inner and outer courts, and then *round about* the boundary wall to the east gate of the outer court, and there sees the stream issuing from beneath the wall at the south side of the eastern gate. B. C.

His angel guide now leads him to the outer gate—*i.e.*, of the wall which enclosed the court of the temple. Here the same waters appear, issuing forth on the right side of the eastern gate. The Hebrew word in the last clause, rendered "ran out," means—they *distilled*, came in drops, oozed forth. The amount of water at this point—the distance of the first half mile—seems therefore to have appeared small.

3-5. The remarkable fact shown here is the rapid increase in the volume of these waters. At the distance of one thousand cubits by

measure, the prophet is led through the waters and finds them only to the *soles of his feet*, which is the sense of the word rendered "ankles;" at the distance of the second thousand cubits, they have risen to his knees; at the third thousand, to his loins; and at the fourth thousand it was a deep river.

As to the general significance of these symbols as seen in this vision, there can be no ground for reasonable doubt. Water is the well-established symbol for the cleansing, life-renewing work of the Spirit of God on human hearts. Even David has it, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; renew a right spirit within me; take not thy holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51 : 7, 11). Isaiah also, "Fear not, O Jacob My servant, for I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed and My blessing upon thine offspring" (chap. 44 : 2, 3). Joel also, "I will *pour out* My Spirit (as if it were water) upon all flesh," and "all the rivers of Judah shall flow with water, and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim," or of the *acacias* (a plant at home in the sterile desert), "for I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." The reader will notice the striking analogy between this passage of Joel and Ezekiel as in our text. In both, waters are the symbol of God's gift of His Spirit; in both, the fountain is in the temple where God of old dwelt among His people; in both, these waters are freighted with blessings wherever they go. As we have already seen, Ezekiel himself has the same figure in chap. 36 : 25-27, a case the more in point because in the same writer. And finally, Zechariah (14 : 8) has a passage closely analogous: "And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former" (front) "sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea" (the Mediterranean); "in summer and in winter shall it be." The peculiar feature here of a division in these waters, making two rivers, one running eastward to the Dead Sea, the other westward to the Mediterranean, serves to show that these rivers are only symbols, and were never thought of as actual rivers in real life. As symbols, it matters not whether they run in both directions or only in one. It scarcely needs to be said that this symbol of water to represent the agencies of the Spirit appears throughout the New Testament, especially in such passages as John 3 : 5 : "Born of water and of the Spirit;" and John 7 : 37-39 and Acts 2 : 17, 33; also in the

Christian rite of baptism. I hold therefore most fully that this vision looks to the glorious effusions of the Spirit in the latter days. That these waters proceed from under the temple develops a great central truth in the Christian economy—viz., that the Divine Spirit attends and blesses human agencies when these agencies work in the line of His appointed Gospel institutions and instrumentalities. Human hands build God's temples; God Himself fills them with His presence and makes them living fountains of water to fertilize the great deserts long wasted by sin; to restore life and life-giving qualities to the dead seas of human depravity, and so to cleanse and clothe with beauty the moral face of all the earth. II. C.

I discover in this richest of allegories a most comprehensive and delightful exhibition of the scheme of redemption, from its inception to its final and glorious consummation. There is good Gospel, and much sound and even profound theology in it. Every incident is suggestive, every allusion instructs. The waters flowed out from under the altar, intimating, not darkly, that the stream of Divine mercy—the river of life—has its source in *sacrifice* and *death*. Until justice is satisfied by the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God *upon the altar*, the waters of life cannot flow forth from beneath it. There can be little doubt but that the prophet borrowed the drapery of his allegory from the physical features of the temple area, and that of the country east and southeast of it. Though the waters first appeared issuing *from under the altar*, yet we need not suppose that the fountain-head was there, but farther back, under the Holy of Holies, beneath the ark and mercy seat, where abode the Shekinah of God's presence, intimating that the true fountain-head of the river of life is in the heart of infinite love, but on its way out and down to ruined man it must pass *under the altar of Divine justice*. There is, therefore, no other place in the universe whence these emblematic waters could flow forth so appropriately as under the altar.

Again, this river was small at first, but increased rapidly as it flowed onward, and thus it has been with the river of life. It was a mere rill from Adam to Noah—the waters were to the ankles. From the deluge to Moses it grew broader and deeper—the waters were unto the knees, and patriarchs with their flocks reposed in green pastures along the verdant banks. From Moses the lawgiver to David the sweet singer, it rolled onward, ever gathering breadth and power, and its shady groves be-

came vocal with psalms and hymns to the God of salvation. And thus it continued to swell, and expand, and deepen, by the addition of many a rill of prophecy and promise, until He who is the true Fountain came, sending forth a mighty river of unfathomable depth which cannot be passed over; a river to swim in; all the world may bathe in it and be cleansed—may drink of it and thirst no more; and ever since the Advent, it has rolled onward farther and farther into the desert, and thus it will continue until its most distant borders shall blossom, and the great dead sea of sin shall be swallowed up of life. The Divine allegory foreshadows the millennium in its amplest acceptation. *W. M. Thomson.*

The progressive establishment of the Messiah's kingdom is declared by some of the later prophets under the most striking and lively representations. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, related by the prophet Daniel, and by him expounded of successive kingdoms, that last kingdom set up by the God of heaven was at first no more than "a stone," but "it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2: 34, 35). In other prophecies the gradual increase of this new dispensation is beautifully represented by the growth of a tender plant. (See Ezek. 17: 22, 23.) And here again the several steps of this growth are pointed out to us by the same prophet Ezekiel, under the image of a stream receiving continual accessions in its progress. The waters were at first extremely shallow, reaching only "to the ankles." At the next ford they came up "to the knees;" afterward "to the loins;" and at last they were risen to a great height; "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over." (See verses 3, 4, 5.) The increasing blessings of the Messiah's kingdom are wont to be expressed under the figure of waters in prophetic language (see Isa. 35: 6, 7); and elsewhere the same figure is used with a peculiar resemblance to this place. (See Joel 3: 18.) Such a sense also best suits that healing and beneficial influence attributed to these sanctified waters, which are said to have power to "heal the waters of the sea," and to give life wherever they flow; "everything shall live whither the river cometh." And of the trees nourished by this stream it is said that "their leaf should not fade, nor their fruit be consumed; but their fruit should be for meat, and their leaf for medicine" (verses 8-12). *Bp. Bagot.*

6, 7. The angel guide says, Hast thou carefully noted the wonderful increase of these waters? Do not lose sight of this fact while

we pass on to other scenes. Then he returns to observe that all along the bank of the river on either side were very many trees, flourishing in verdure and beauty, being fertilized by these living waters. The revelator John has the same symbols of surpassing beauty and verdure in his paradise (Rev. 22 : 1, 2). H. C.

**8. The waters shall be healed.** This finally represents the tendency of the Gospel to heal the corruptions of human nature. *Up. N. come.*

**10. The fishers.** The mention of fishers does indeed appear to determine this increase of religious knowledge and practice to Christianity. Our Saviour Christ told His disciples that He would make them "fishers of men" (Matt. 4 : 19). *Up. Secker.*

**8-12.** The last allusion to the Dead Sea found in the Scriptures. The passage records the vision of the holy waters seen by the prophet Ezekiel, yet the glowing prophetic description does not disclaim to mention the humble names of geographical localities. The implication of this vision is precisely such as to sanction a modern popular teaching derived suggestively from the same materials. All the sweet waters of the Jordan and its neighbor streams, forever pouring into the Dead Sea, do not materially or permanently abate its bitterness. The fact is often considered emblematical of the inefficiency of all merely natural agencies for the radical reformation of human character and the regeneration of the human race. Set before a depraved character your examples of truth and honor; inculcate upon it your lessons of right and justice; pour upon it the sweet influences of educated and refined society, and what is the result? So, attempt without religion truly to civilize a barbarous race, and how will you succeed? Human character has its permanent qualities, like the bitter waters of the Dead Sea. All merely natural influences are utterly inoperative to change these qualities, such influences being quickly exhaled, leaving the character as depraved as ever. The prophetic vision implying this truth teaches further, that the correction of human depravity and the ultimate regeneration of the human race are to be expected from a power outside of humanity—from the source of Omnipotent Divinity.

The prophet Ezekiel, dwelling in captivity by the river Chebar, saw in vision, under the type of a restored and perfected Palestine, a regenerated world. And in this vision the waters of the Dead Sea became changed to sweetness and teemed with life. And how

was this result seen to be accomplished? Why, by the flowing into the sea of a great river, having its origin in the new sanctuary at Jerusalem. This river, which the prophet saw issuing from the threshold of the temple eastward—its waters swelling and widening, until rising first to his knees, and then to his loins, they became at length too deep to walk in—this river went flowing down into the desert plain, through the wilderness of Judah—its banks lined with all "trees for meat," bearing unfading leaves and perpetual fruits—and having passed the desert plain and emptied into the sea, the waters of the sea were thereby healed. And the prophet declares that the fishers shall stand upon the shore of the sea, "from En-gedi to En-eglaim," or around its great northern basin, spreading their nets for the fish which now swarm the sweet waters. May we not accept this vision as truly prophetic? Has not the Gospel of God proved its power to regenerate human character and to make desert spots of humanity "blossom as the rose"? And may we not expect that, when the time for the full accomplishment of God's merciful purpose shall arrive, the stream of God's salvation will be so augmented, that, in the fulness of its saving power, the Dead Sea of our corrupt humanity will be turned to sweet purity, and "the earth be filled with the glory of God?" *N. C. Bart.*

The gradual increase of the stream issuing from the sanctuary, from the Holy of Holies, is a vivid representation of the progress of the waters of eternal life, which, deriving their source from the hidden counsels of mercy and wisdom of the triune Jehovah, at first presented, as they gushed forth from the cross of the despised Galilean, an appearance so humble as to be most distasteful to the pride and foolishness of man, but yet did rapidly and irresistibly overspread nation after nation, and shall continue to flow on with increasing might, until the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. Nor are the inestimable benefits which the Gospel conveys to a ruined world less forcibly portrayed. "These waters," says the prophet, "go down into the desert, and go into the sea." "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." It traverses the desert, and its barren sands are overspread with verdant and fruitful trees. It flows onward to the sea whose bitter waters had destroyed all life, and the poisonous waters are at once healed, and teem with a great multitude of fish. The influence also of these typical waters is as permanent and extensive as it is beneficial; for it is

written : " By the river upon the bank thereof, | on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed : it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary ; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." Such, too, have ever been the blessed results of the everlasting Gospel of the grace of God. Whenever the waters have indeed issued from the sanctuary, whenever the pure Word of God has been preached, the Holy Ghost has accompanied that Word with His soul-regenerating power. The poisonous and dead sea of the world has been healed of its destructive influence. Its inhabitants, with no spiritual life in them, but dead in trespasses and sins, have been quickened by Divine grace. The barren desert of this earthly existence, which sin has made desolate by its withering blasts of sickness, and disappointment, and separation, and death, is gladdened through the Gospel of life and immortality with resignation, patience, peace, hope, joy in believing, and all the varied fruits of the Spirit. Nor are these life-giving blessings of the Gospel exhausted or diminished by the lapse of time. They are trees whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed ; but as months, and years, and ages pass, they shall still continue to yield new fruit. The Gospel of Christ is like Him who brought it down from heaven to man—the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. The revolutions of nations have only manifested that the kingdom of Christ is one that cannot be shaken. The lapse of ages has only accumulated fresh evidence that the waters of life are inexhaustible. The discovery of new lands and people has added fresh trophies to the power of the cross, and proves that wherever human beings are found, however differing from ourselves in habits and knowledge, the Gospel is needed, is adapted, is intended for those human beings.

*Bp. C. Baring.*

These waters of the vision were fed by no tributaries—and herein is a marvellous thing. Those waters had but one source—just those drops at the gate of the temple, and that was all. They issued out of the sanctuary ; they grew and they grew. They were inherently developed. Those drops of the temple walls became a river only a few thousand cubits away. Their ever-increasing volume came, therefore, from their seemingly exhaustless capacity of unfolding. This is true of the Gos-

pel stream coming out of the sanctuary. No other religions have swelled its waters with their inflowing tide. Nor wealth, nor learning, nor art, nor government has contributed one drop to its volume. Sometimes it has been claimed that these things have helped to make the tide of influence coming out from the Christian Church and sweeping far and wide over the world's waste places, but the subsidence of the waters that have been formed by wealth, and learning, and art, and government, has proved that the claim is false. The influence of the Church to-day, and the secret of its depth and power, is the pure Gospel stream, accompanied by no adjunct and fed by no tributary. Issuing out of the sanctuary, it widened and deepened, until now the waters are waters to swim in, that cannot be passed over. These waters transform whatever they touch. Everywhere they spread in their onward flow, they make a place of beauty. Trees grow up along their banks ; the desert blossoms at their coming. Beauty and fertility were everywhere. This is the picture. What are the actual scenes marking the course of the Gospel stream down through the world ? Where do you find the world's moral garden to-day ? Where are the high places of the earth ? Places high in cleanliness and conscience, in charity and forgiveness ? They are here, by the banks of the River of Life, flowing from the sanctuary.

This picture of prophecy is the reality of history. From the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost, whenever God has been in the Church, her influence has been immediate and beneficent. Nothing has made her influence a track of fragrance throughout the world but this presence. Nothing transformed deserts into fertility but this. The one sole condition of power on the part of the Church is that she be filled with the Spirit of God. If the Lord God come down and dwell in His sanctuary, out of His sanctuary will issue the waters of salvation.

The practical lesson is that the Spirit of God is the spirit of missions. A sanctuary with no outflowing waters is a church that accomplishes no saving results. A church that does not let its influence go down into the moral deserts and the Dead Seas of sin ; that sends not the healing flood of the Gospel out from its gates, making a track of greenness and beauty ; that does not go, with its sympathies and prayers and alms, into all the world, is a church with a name to live, but dead. A church cannot exist

long that fashions for itself a beautiful temple and repeats an orthodox creed, but that has not the Spirit of God in its sanctuary. *H. Johnson.*

**13-21.** *Borders of the Land as Divided.*

**13, 14.** The uniform law of Messianic prophecy is to promise the future Canaan not to Judah alone, but to the Twelve Tribes—to Ephraim and the lost Ten Tribes as truly as to Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes which so long constituted the southern kingdom. It would seem that the Spirit of inspiration overlooked the fact of the revolt under Jeroboam; started at a point much farther back, even with the promise made to the patriarchs and specially renewed to David, and built upon that basis the whole structure of their glorious future. We may notice this remarkable feature of Messianic prophecy in both Jeremiah (chaps. 3: 12, 18; 23: 2, 6-8; 31: 1, 9, 23, 33) and in Ezekiel (chaps. 36: 1, 8, 12, 32, 37; 37: 11, 12, 28; 39: 25). *H. C.*

**15.** The borders of the land follow closely Num. 34. In Numbers the borders begin from the south, as the people came up from Egypt; in Ezekiel, from the north, as they might return from Babylon. The occupation is ideal, but is grounded, as usual, on an actual state of things. *B. C.*

**18, Side.** The word "side" is very ancient (Amos 3: 12). Its occurrences elsewhere are singular: Exodus, fifteen times; Leviticus, six; Numbers, six; Joshua, six; Jeremiah, four, and Ezekiel, forty-seven times. No one can read the north, south, east and west in Ezekiel (chap. 47) without feeling that he is copying Exodus and Numbers.

**19.** What is believed to be an insurmountable objection to the reality of the legislation becomes an unanswerable proof of its antiquity. Ezekiel speaks twice of the "side of the south southward," or, "the side of the Negeb southward." There was no call on him to add *southward* after Negeb. He was in Babylon, far to the north of Judah and its dry steppe, at the time of drawing up that sketch. Only one reason can be given for his unnecessary plainness of speech. He was echoing or copying the words which were used in describing the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Nowhere but in Ezekiel's writings and in the Pentateuch do these strange words, "The side of the south southward," occur. One author clearly borrowed the phrase from another. If the Pentateuch was the book in which it first occurred, the borrowing of it by Ezekiel is easily understood. But if, as several writers

think, Ezekiel used the phrase first, then the addition of *southward* to south becomes a puzzle of greatest difficulty. He had no reason for so doing. He was uselessly repeating the same idea in other words. He was committing a fault of style which laid him open to censure. But there was no fault and no censure, if he was echoing, as he unquestionably was, the words of an ancient and much-esteemed author.

But the prophet gives a curious and convincing proof of his indebtedness to the Pentateuch. "The south side southward" was an archaic phrase, which a reader and imitator of ancient books was entitled to borrow. "The east side toward the sun rising," was another found in Exodus (27: 13), Numbers (2: 3; 34: 15), and Joshua (19: 12). Ezekiel altered it into "the east side eastward," by repeating the word for east. The change of word does not indicate originality. But he rounded off the four cardinal points in the same way, and he stands alone in so doing. He spoke of "the north northward" (Ezek. 47: 17), and of "the west westward" (Ezek. 45: 7). He was imitating an old book; he was not borrowing from it. Beyond doubt Ezekiel's imitations and borrowings in this matter show the homage paid by him to the same Pentateuch which we now study. *Sime.*

**22, 23.** Inasmuch as enlargement by the accession of Gentiles proselytized to the Jewish faith was a cherished feature of the ancient economy and afforded a choice symbol of the great and glorious ingathering of the Gentiles in the Christian age, it was every way fitting that special provision should be made here for the location and naturalization of strangers who might choose to cast in their lot with Israel. Here it stands. *H. C.*

**Chap. 48.** The distribution of the Holy Land in detail. The order of the original occupation by the tribes under Joshua is partly, but only partly followed. It is a new order of things; and its ideal character is evinced, as elsewhere, by exact and equal measurements. From north to south seven tribes succeed each other: Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Judah, each occupying the full breadth of the land from east to west. Then comes a portion, separated as an offering to the Lord, subdivided into a northern portion for the Levites, a central portion for the priests and the temple, a southern portion for the city and those who serve it. These three form a square, which does not occupy the whole breadth of the land, but is flanked on either

side, east and west, by portions assigned to the prince. Then follow, south of the city, five portions for the five remaining tribes—Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad—similar to those assigned to the seven. Thus the Levites, the temple, and city, are guarded by Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes who had throughout preserved their allegiance to the true sovereignty of Jehovah, and thus the plan expresses the presence of Jehovah among His people, summed up in the name of the city, with which Ezekiel's prophecy closes, "The Lord is there." B. C.

This vision closes legitimately with a definite geographical location of the several tribes (verses 1-7, 23-28); a more expanded description of the sacred reserve (verses 8-22) resumed from chap. 45:1-7; and a description of the gates of the great city (verses 29-35).

**1-7.** The best view of this assignment of the tribes will be obtained from the diagram, page 188. It will be seen there at a glance that the territory of each tribe extended entirely across the country from west to east, and of equal width. The actual sinuosities and irregularities of the western border, and of the eastern also, are overlooked, as well as the narrowing of the real Palestine from its greatest width at its southern extremity to its least at the northern. The location of the tribes differs in other respects widely from that made by Joshua. The latter was every way irregular; the former is a model of perfect mathematical regularity. Doubtless the consideration of *order* ruled in this arrangement. Everything about it indicates that it was and is only *ideal*—a thing of vision only.

**8-22.** This is the sacred reserve, "the holy oblation," first brought to view (chap. 45:1-7); but here taken up again, repeated and somewhat expanded. The diagram (page 188) will give the best view of these apportionments. The purpose of this reserve is obviously to carry out the great idea of the ancient economy in its extreme form—seclusion of the holy from the profane and earthly—the broadest possible distinction between things sacred and things common everywhere kept up in order to cultivate a critical habit of moral discrimination between holiness and sin, and to impress a sense of the obligation of moral purity. This moral discipline is above all price in value. But we should quite mistake the genius of the Gospel dispensation if we were to assume that God proposes to develop its future and higher stages by returning to the modes and forms of Juda-

ism. No; his thought is rather to carry the culture obtained by the aid of that ancient *régime* out into the world-wide fields of human society, and train men to "live holily, justly and unblamably *in this present world*;" not to shut themselves out of it for the sake of the holiness of the cloister. We may fitly notice that the Lord makes ample provision for the support of His Levite servants as well as for the priests and for those who serve in the city, taken from all the tribes of Israel. The ministers who labor and serve under this new *régime* are thoughtfully provided for, as if specially worthy of their hire. The implication is that only *with such provision* can they be expected to hold on, true to their work, kept above the torturing power of poverty to seduce them from their sacred functions.

**30-35.** This great city, a model of method and order—each tribe represented in its twelve gates—is imitated by the revelator John in his city of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-21). John, however, was farther advanced in the light of the new dispensation, for in his city is "no temple," while here the temple is the central fact. But the glory of the whole scene is brought out here in the significant name of the city which was to stand from that day onward—"Jehovah Shammah;" *The Lord is there!* It is the place of Jehovah's dwelling in the midst of His people. Everything is shaped according to Mosaic ideas, for the perpetual dwelling of Jehovah among His people. The entire arrangements, including the sacred reserve, its special localities for the Levites, for the priests, for the more menial servants of the sanctuary; for the prince also and for all the tribes—all, every several thing, provides for the great central fact, and adjusts itself around that living truth—Jehovah dwelling forever, and forever manifesting Himself among His chosen; He their God, and they His people. Prophetically, it looks down into the Christian age to its great central truth—the Lord by His Divine Spirit making His abode through all ages in the hearts of His children. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." H. C.

**35. The Lord is there.** It is frequently said in the sacred writings that a person or a thing shall be called by a certain name, where it is predicted that the person or thing shall be endowed with those qualities which the name imports. When Isaiah predicts the coming of the Messiah, he says that "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God,



the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," because He was to possess the qualities which would serve as a foundation to these titles. In this sense Jerusalem is called in the Psalms the "city of God, the city of the Great King;" and in Isaiah, "the city of Righteousness, the faithful city;" and in this passage, "The Lord is there." *Culcut.*—In this new Jerusalem, the Church of Christ, God shall dwell in a more glorious manner, and make it the place of His perpetual residence; so that every part of that city shall be honored with evident tokens of the Divine presence; and every member of it being dedicated to God's service, and becoming an habitation of God through His Spirit, shall have some degree of the holiness of the temple where God had placed His name. This is in a lower degree fulfilled in all Christians, who are called "the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16), and "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). *W. Louth.*

The prophecy of Ezekiel, while it is "the last expiring cry of the Jewish monarchy," is, like the fabled cry of the dying swan, a noble song as well as a cry. From his captivity, and from the midst of visions of his country's desolations, it was given him to gaze upon and to paint for his hearers the glorious future that was hovering over the true Israel of God. That Israel is to be folded in safety by a true Shepherd; is to be, spiritually, as a man in robust and vigorous health, for "a new heart and a new spirit" shall be given; is to be, in the completeness of its revival, "an exceeding great army," quickened to life by mystic breath "from the four winds," and is to go forth to conquer in a terrific struggle with the "Gog and Magog" of heathenism; is to become a vast and perfect "temple;" is to be blessed and to bless others by a "river" of healing waters. But its highest glory is revealed in the last two words of the book, for it is to be as a country, the name of whose city is Jehovah Shammah, "the Lord is there." *U. R. Thomas.*

The name given to this city; from that day, when it shall be new erected according to this model, the name of it shall be not as before, Jerusalem—the vision of peace—but, which is the original of that and more than equivalent to it, Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is there. This intimated: 1. That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them and His residence among them, both in His ordinances and in His providences. 2. That the Gospel Church should likewise have the presence of God in it, though

not in the Shekinah, as of old, yet in a token of it no less sure, that of His Spirit. Where the Gospel is faithfully preached, Gospel ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, The Lord is there; for faithful is He that has said it, and He will be as good as His word. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. The Lord is there in His Church, to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own His sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon Him for. 3. That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this—that the Lord is there. John's representation of that blessed state does indeed far exceed this in many respects. That is all gold and pearls and precious stones; it is much larger than this and much brighter, for it needs not the light of the sun. But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be that God Himself shall be with them (Rev. 21:3); that He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them (Rev. 7:15). And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that the Lord is there. Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be forever with the Lord. *H.*

Ezekiel's whole sketch is ideal. It was not literally obeyed in a single particular. The temple was not rebuilt by his directions. The ceremonial was not restored as he prescribed. The land was not divided agreeably to his injunctions. This non-compliance on the part of those who honored him as a prophet of the Lord shows that they understood his words not as commands which they were to obey, but as an idealized picture of the future which the Lord would bring to pass. It was no more designed to guide in the work of reconstruction than Jer. 31:38-40 was to be followed in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, or than Zech. 2:4 enjoined their demolition. The departures from Levitical law above referred to may have been designed, on the one hand, to intimate that the ceremonial was not a finality and forever unalterable; and, on the other hand, like plain impossibilities, that are also incorporated in his scheme to suggest that they were not intended to be obeyed, so long, at least, as the Mosaic law held sway. There never could be any hesitation about the proper answer to the question whether their obedience was due to the vision of Ezekiel or to the statutes of Moses.

The latter was law ; the former was a picture of the future, which in many respects may have been perplexing, but it was not for the guidance of their conduct. W. H. Green.

I plead for the figurative interpretation and against the literal, and draw my arguments : (1) *From the New Testament* ; (2) from the Old, and especially from these prophecies themselves in their relation to the writer and his first readers ; (3) from the nature of the case—especially as creating an intensely strong probability against the literal and in favor of the figurative interpretation.

1. The literal system of interpretation must be rejected because it is absolutely precluded and forbidden by the New Testament. The entire spirit and genius of the Gospel dispensation as unfolded by Christ and His inspired apostles is utterly, squarely, fatally against it. For the literal system must hold that, according to this vision, Judaism will yet be fully restored—restored with more than all its ancient surroundings, and in more than its ancient fulness. But, according to the New Testament, *Judaism is dead*. It had done its great work when Jesus died as the Lamb of God, and thenceforth it ceased to exist under Divine authority. In the age of the Epistle to the Hebrews it had already “decayed, waxed old, and was ready to vanish away.” Paul declared repeatedly and in many various forms that Christ had “broken down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles” by setting aside whatever was peculiar to the Jew ; that he “had abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances,” etc. (Eph. 2 : 14, 15) ; that he had “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us” (Gentiles), “which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross” (Col. 2 : 14). This was the end of the Mosaic system.

2. The evidence from the Old Testament—*i. e.*, from these prophecies themselves, considered in view of the circumstances of their authors and first readers, may be presented with brevity here. In a word, then, these prophets were *Jews*, of Jewish education, with only Jewish conceptions of the kingdom of God, and with only Jewish terms, phrases, figures and symbols for expressing these conceptions. The same is true of their first readers, to whom of necessity they must adapt their writings. If any should suggest here that the Lord Himself is the speaker and revealer, still the case remains the same ; for the Lord speaks to *Jews*,

whether prophets or people, and only in Jewish language and figures. Hence the future kingdom of Christ *must be revealed* to the prophets and to the Jewish people in words and symbols drawn from the existing economy. This necessity is absolute, *if* the Lord aimed to reveal anything—if He aimed to speak so as to be understood. This principle is introduced here, not precisely to prove that these prophecies reveal Gospel blessings, but to *account for* their phraseology and their symbols. The proof that they teach the gloriously converting power of the Gospel and of the Spirit of God in the latter days comes from the facts : (1) that they refer to Gospel times ; (2) that they must therefore be construed of Gospel blessings, and not of Mosaic forms and rituals ; (3) that the nature and magnitude of these symbols demand a most magnificent fulfilment, and can be satisfied with nothing less.

3. In the nature of the case the literal system is for every reason intensely improbable. Thus : That the Twelve Tribes should appear again ; produce their unbroken and distinct genealogies ; prove their identity, and file into their places in the allotment of tribes as given in Ezek. 48, is violently improbable. That the natural boundaries of Palestine should be miraculously changed so as to make it a perfect rectangle ; that the great river from the sanctuary should flow, with a growth so unprecedented, into the Dead Sea, and make its waters salubrious, fill them with fish, etc., all in the literal sense, is very improbable. That the better times of the Gospel age, its one period of most perfect beauty, purity and glory, should be brought about by receding from the genius of New Testament Christianity to the genius of Judaism, is pre-eminently improbable. That the Lord should subject His Gentile churches to the same terrible contest with Judaism which cost so much martyr-blood in the first and second centuries is improbable. That He should subject the Jews themselves to those temptations to bigotry, exclusiveness, and uncharitableness, which in the first Christian age often proved too stubborn for even the grace of the Gospel, is improbable. That He should expose them to the power of the old national spirit of reliance upon ritual forms and ceremonies, or to the national pride in which they accounted themselves the only favored people of God, is utterly improbable. And finally, that the Lord should give His Church in the future age a system in which the spirit of love, purity and peace is lost in the letter of

forms and ceremonies ; in which (as *e.g.* in Ezek. 47 : 1-12) you have, instead of the unexampled glory and power of the Divine Spirit, only a beautiful river and plenty of good fish, and fruit-trees in abundance for sensual delights—in short, that God should lead the Church and the world backward from a spiritual Gospel to a sensual paradise, is utterly improbable and even incredible. For one, I rejoice that there is no trustworthy evidence to sustain the literal interpretation, and that the figurative view is amply supported by evidence, unfolding glorious truth in harmony with the whole tenor of Old Testament prophecy and of New Testament interpretation of it, and revealing a sublimely grand and auspicious future for the kingdom of our Divine Redeemer. H. C.

# DANIEL, AND HIS BOOK OF HISTORY AND PROPHECY.

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## 1. DANIEL.

DANIEL comes first to view, a Jewish youth of the royal family, taken captive to Babylon in the first deportation of captives, in the third year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 606 or 607; and is soon after selected with others for his wisdom, efficiency and agreeable person, to be trained in the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans, for service under the king. This custom of taking young men of the finest parts from a captive or subject race to fill responsible positions about the king has prevailed in many despotic governments, and is essentially the usage of the Turkish empire to this day. It finds its motives: (1) In the fact that such monarchs need men about them of the very first abilities; (2) in the difficulty they would experience in getting young men of such ability from among their own people who might not, by virtue of their social position or connections, become dangerous to the throne. We are then to think of Daniel as educated thoroughly in the language, literature and general culture of the Chaldeans (this term being used here for the learned, sacerdotal and scientific class, and not for the mass of the people), but yet as adhering with noble firmness to the religious faith of his fathers. In this position he developed extraordinary capacities in the line of wisdom, fidelity and efficiency, and consequently rose to the rank of prime minister under the Chaldean sovereigns, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and remarkably attained and held an equally exalted position in the succeeding dynasty, the Medo-Persian, under Darius the Median and Cyrus.

Daniel must have lived and retained his vigor to a great age. The period during which he appears before us in this book, from the beginning of the Captivity to the very end of it, was seventy years; and we may reasonably suppose him from sixteen to twenty years of age at the beginning of this period, and of course

almost ninety at its close. Yet his heart appears full of earnest life and power in his memorable prayer for his people, given us in chap. 9, just on the eve of the restoration. H. C.

From tender youth to extreme age, for more than seventy years, the prophet lived at the Babylonian and Medo-Persian court (1:1, 6, 21; 10:1). But more than this, he took part in the government of the State, in which he occupied a high official position (2:48; 5:29; 6:29; 8:27). He was thus enabled to gain an insight and knowledge of the organization of political affairs in the kingdoms of the world, and fitted to be the recipient of what, perhaps, I may be permitted to call his political revelations. But he has likewise obtained the spiritual point of view. The experiences which Daniel made through the deep humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar, through Belshazzar's downfall, the rapid efflorescence, decay, and vanishing of the Babylonian monarchy, the miraculous deliverance of himself and his friends (chaps. 3-6), all these events made on him a profound impression—that the powers of the world are transitory and the glory of the kingdom of God eternal. *Auberlen.*

The book simply outlines the personal fortunes of a man whose life spans the entire period of the Babylonian Captivity, and tells us what outlook into the future was given to him of the world's political history. The visions of Daniel constitute a philosophy of history valuable as the contribution of a man whose abilities secured for him high official station in the government of his conquerors. Apart from any claim of inspiration, Daniel's studies and conclusions are worthy of serious attention, when you consider the nobility of his character and the length of his public life. He never preaches, and therein he differs from the prophet whose special mission is that of public warning, exhortation and encouragement. Daniel is simply a great and gifted layman, whom the splendors of Babylon cannot tempt

from the religion of his fathers, and in whose visions we trace his passionate attachment to and unshaken faith in the future of his despised and captive people. No burdens of State could prevent him from praying three times each day, with eyes fixed, through open windows, upon Jerusalem. He does nothing from policy, everything from principle. There is an equally remarkable completeness in his character. There are in it no violent contrasts, no lapses over which we must throw the mantle of charity. He is a man of the finest and firmest courage. He tells Nebuchadnezzar the truth; he is fearless before Belshazzar; he prays according to his habit, without a thought of the lion's den. He is always contented, whether filling a responsible post or remanded to obscurity. He bides his time. And he is full of charity. He cherishes no animosities. He does not turn upon his persecutors. He could have had no great love for the priestly class; but his first public appearance is on their behalf, because they had been condemned to death unless they could reproduce the king's forgotten dream. It is a noble figure that stands out against the dark background of general vanity, revelry and cruelty; and is a notable instance of the supremacy of righteousness over brute force. It cannot be doubted that Daniel's quiet influence at court must have done much to soften the rigors of the captivity, and it goes far toward explaining the favorable disposition of Cyrus and the facilities which were gladly accorded to Zerubbabel by Cyrus, and to Nehemiah by Darius. As Joseph prepared the way for his father's household, so Daniel prepared the way for the captives of Judah. He had been eighteen years in Babylon when the captives came pouring in from the wasted city, and he was held in high esteem. They must have been considerably treated for his sake; and his name must have speedily become a household word among them. It was not a misplaced revenge. He has not suffered by a lapse of 2400 years; and we still summon men to the highest level of character when we say to them, "Dare be like Daniel." *Behrends.*

We have in Daniel a man of intense religious feeling and a true patriot; and one possessed also of great ability and a powerful mind, upon which numerous and weighty influences were brought to bear. Can we wonder if he viewed the world with a different eye from that of the exiled priest Ezekiel, living in penury among the poor Jewish colonists planted on the river Chebar? or from that of Jeremiah, struggling

against all the evil influences which were daily dragging the feeble Zedekiah and the decaying people of Jerusalem down to ruin? or even from that of Isaiah, whose rapt vision, spurning this poor earth, soared aloft to the spiritual glories of Messiah's reign, and sang how the sucker, springing up from Jesse's cut-down lineage, and growing as a root in a dry ground, should by its wounds bring to the world healing, and by its death purchase for mankind life? But each of these had his own office and his special message; and Daniel's office was to show that the Christian religion was not to be an enlarged Judaism, but a Judaism fulfilled and made free. Instead of a church for the Jews, there was to be a church for all mankind. The thought present to his mind is that of the one God establishing one kingdom and one religion on earth, and he sees these world kingdoms preparing the way for it, but themselves coming to naught as it grows and covers all the world. We know how he loved his nation, and how, even in extreme old age, he still prayed with his face toward Jerusalem; but he places out of sight the work of his country and of his church, and sees only the world's history, and the share which it has in preparing for the universal dominion of God. R. P. S.

Daniel's conduct was the same throughout, always in harmony with itself. Attentive to his duty to God, he was equally so in his duty to man. Faithful to his God, he is equally faithful to his king. His morality is no less conspicuous than his religion. He is fervent in spirit, but no less diligent in business. Regular and earnest in his closet, he is equally assiduous in his office. Studious in his Bible, as a man of business he is well acquainted with his books. His enemies can find no fault in him, and no ground of accusation with the king, but in the matter of his religion. He is favored with revelations from heaven and the visits of angels; yet no sooner are his visions withdrawn and his usual state of health recovered than he returns to do "the king's business." He is endowed, even while yet young, with a wisdom and understanding superior to that of all the wise men of Babylon, yet disclaims all merit and wisdom of his own as being greater than those of other men. He is tender and gentle, while bold and uncompromising in professing the truth and reproving sin. He is distressed as being the bearer of evil tidings to Nebuchadnezzar, yet fearlessly declares to the hardened Belshazzar both his sin and his doom. *Amos.*

It was the love of God that presented him

with a clearer landscape of the Gospel than any other prophet ever had; he was the beloved prophet under the Old Dispensation, as John was the beloved disciple under the New; and, both being animated by the same Divine love, there was a wonderful harmony between them; both engaged young in the service of God, and consecrated their lives by an early piety; and both lived to a great and equal age—to about an hundred years. Both had the like intimacy with God, the like admittance into the most adorable mysteries, and the like abundance of heavenly visions. Both had the like lofty flights and ecstatic revelations. *Bp. Ken.*

## 2. THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

The Book of Daniel is almost as much historical as prophetic. In the Hebrew canon its place is between Esther and Ezra, two books, both of which are histories. One entire half of it (chaps. 1-6) is a narrative of events, and is as capable of receiving historical illustration as any other portion of the sacred volume. Daniel, moreover, supplies a gap in the biblical history which is not otherwise filled up by any sacred writer. He is the historian of the Captivity, the writer who alone furnishes any series of events for that dark and dismal period. His narrative may be said, in a general way, to intervene between Kings and Chronicles on the one hand and Ezra on the other, or (more strictly) to fill out the sketch which the author of Chronicles gives in a single verse of his last chapter: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he" (*i.e.*, Nebuchadnezzar) "away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia" (2 Chron. 36:20). We learn from Daniel particulars of this servitude.

The main events related in Daniel are the long and glorious reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, who both commenced and completed the captivity of the Jews; his elevation of Daniel to a position of high authority in his kingdom; his treatment of the "three children," Ananias, Azarias, and Misael; his dreams, his terrible illness and recovery; the impiety and punishment of Belshazzar; the capture of Babylon; the accession of "Darius the Mede," and his treatment of Daniel; and the accession, a year or two later, of "Cyrus the Persian." These events, it will be observed, are partly of a public, partly of a private character. The names and reigns of kings, their acts and fate, the order of their succession and general character of their government, the transfer of empire from

one race or nation to another, and the like, are of the former kind; the particular treatment of individuals among their subjects is of the latter. It is, of course, only of the former class of facts that we can expect illustrations from profane history; and to them, accordingly, the inquiry should be confined.

Daniel opens with some chronological statements which, at first sight, seem self-contradictory. He relates that, in a certain year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, went up to Jerusalem and besieged it (1:1); that, the siege being successful, he carried off from the city certain captives, among whom was Daniel, and delivered him into the care of his chief eunuch, with an injunction that he should educate him *for three years*, and then bring him into his presence (1:3-6); that this was done, and the captives were admitted among the "wise men" (1:18-20); and that after this, in the *second year* of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, they were brought into danger by a decree which commanded that the wise men should be put to death (2:1-13). We are enabled to reconcile these statements by finding in Berosus that the first expedition of Nebuchadnezzar against Syria and the commencement of the Jewish captivity took place toward the close of the reign of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, in B.C. 605, or possibly in B.C. 606; between which time and Nebuchadnezzar's second year, B.C. 603, there would be room for the three years' instruction spoken of; more especially as "three years," according to the Hebrew usage, means no more than one whole year and parts, however small, of two other years. Thus, if Daniel were taken to Babylon in the autumn of B.C. 605 and placed at once under the chief eunuch, he might have been presented to Nebuchadnezzar as educated early in B.C. 603, and before the close of that year have run the risk of destruction and escaped from it. Nebuchadnezzar's second year would not be out till the Thoth of B.C. 602, according to Babylonian modes of reckoning. The only difficulty that remains, if it be a difficulty, is that Nebuchadnezzar is called "king of Babylon" in Dan. 1:1 when he was merely crown prince and commander-in-chief on behalf of his father. But this is a *prolepsis* common to most writers of history. G. R.

The Book of Daniel stands in the Hebrew canon among the Hagiographa or Sacred Writings, which are specially so called in distinction to the Law and the prophets, not as implying any greater degree of sanctity, but as claiming an actual and independent sanctity for them,

notwithstanding their position as third in the scale. In that canon the position of Daniel is after Esther and before Ezra. In the Septuagint and Vulgate, as also in Luther's version, its place is among the four greater prophets, after Ezekiel, which is its natural chronological position, supposing Daniel to have been an historical character and this book a genuine production by him, for though Daniel's career began earlier than Ezekiel's, he no doubt long survived him, as he lived to witness the return of his countrymen in consequence of the edict of Cyrus, B.C. 536 (Dan. 1: 21; 10: 1).

It consists of twelve chapters, which are written partly in Hebrew and partly in that Aramaic dialect commonly called Chaldee, which the Jews seemed to have acquired, and more or less adopted, in the land of their captivity. The first six chapters relate matters of fact of a substantive nature; the last six contain various visions which were vouchsafed to Daniel. The former half is divided into several sections loosely joined together without any formula of transition or even a connecting particle except between the first and second chapters. In fact, they form complete narratives in themselves, but they follow on in natural sequence, so that the former chapters are presupposed in the latter.

*Authenticity, Genuineness and Integrity.* This book has uniformly been ascribed to Daniel by the combined testimony of the Jewish and Christian Churches. In recent years, however, this judgment has been utterly reversed. As the issues depending upon it are very important, it is desirable to enter into this question at some length. There are three questions involved: (1) The authenticity; (2) the genuineness; and (3) the integrity of the book. By its authenticity we mean its trustworthiness as a record of fact; by its genuineness, that it is rightly ascribed to its supposed author; and by its integrity, that it is an original whole, and not the casual combination of distinct and independent parts. It is important to point out that the questions of authenticity and genuineness are, to a large extent, interdependent—that is to say, if the book is authentic it can hardly be other than genuine, and if it is genuine we may take it for granted that it is authentic.

If Daniel wrote this book we may well hesitate to question its details; and if its details are trustworthy, there is no one to whom we are so likely to be indebted for them as to Daniel—to his presiding supervision and care, if not to his personal authorship. It should also be

clearly noted that in the historic credibility of the book, or, in other words, its authenticity, is inseparably bound up the due recognition of the miraculous. The stories of the deliverance of Daniel's companions from the fiery furnace and of himself from the den of lions are such as to baffle all explanation to account for them. We are challenged by the writer on the most definite issue to determine whether they occurred as facts or did not occur. If they occurred as facts, then they are miracles and can be nothing else; if they did not occur, then the story relating them must be a romance, a fiction, or a myth, and it can be nothing else. These stories, of all others in Scripture, the most resolutely refuse to yield to any process or theory which, accepting them as artistic sketches, with a moral and didactic purpose, nevertheless denies to them the weight of historic reality, and dissipates their substantial worth as actual occurrences.

The Book of Daniel, therefore, offers a crucial test on many points which are directly or implicitly denied in the present day. Nor must we imagine that it is only in the present day that the severity of this test is felt. There never can have been a time when it was really more easy to believe the story of the deliverance from the fiery furnace than it is now, if the imagination truly grappled with it; but when the truth of Daniel was first impugned, it was rather on the prophetic than the historic ground. Porphyry, who died A.D. 304, wrote fifteen books against the religion of Christ, and the whole of his twelfth book was taken up with an attack on the genuineness of Daniel. He maintained that it was written by a Jew in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and for this reason it seemed to predict truly up to this point, but falsely afterward. The Book of Daniel, then, raises a definite issue on the subject of miracles and prophecy; if it is genuine it is absolutely impossible to refuse to acknowledge either; and for this reason it is easy to see that a disposition to reject either may well tend to a prejudgment of the genuineness or authenticity of Daniel, not on the actual merits of the question, but in accordance with preconceived opinions upon miracles and prophecy.

*Canonicity.* Our business, however, is with the grounds upon which Daniel has been accepted as canonical and believed as an integral part of the Holy Scripture. And these are twofold—external; internal.

1. It must be admitted that externally the Book of Daniel comes to us as well authenticated as any other canonical book. First, there

is the reference in the first Book of Maccabees, 2:59, 60, "Ananias, Azarias and Misael, by believing, were saved out of the flame; Daniel for his innocency was delivered from the mouths of lions." This is mentioned in conjunction with David and Elias, and it is evidently regarded as of the same character and authority as what is related of them. It is true, of course, that the speech in which it occurs may be an imaginary one of the writer's, which he has put into the mouth of the dying Mattathias, but at all events we must regard it as one which he might have spoken.

At this time, therefore, the historian saw nothing improbable in Mattathias being acquainted with the history of Daniel, and as we have no history in which these events are recorded but this Book of Daniel, he must have learned them from it, and at any rate proof is afforded that when the Book of Maccabees was written the canonical position of Daniel was secure. Now the first Book of Maccabees was probably written in the last quarter of the second century before Christ—that is to say, about two generations after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. It follows, therefore, that if Daniel was a late production, it had managed to work its way into reception on a level with the rest of Scripture in the short space of sixty or seventy years. This is by no means likely, as the first Book of Maccabees itself was not so received, nor is there any reason to believe that any other book of the same period was allowed a place in the canon.

2. Again, this first Book of Maccabees not only presupposes the existence of Daniel, which it does merely as a matter of independent testimony, just as Milton's allusion to Shakespeare proves that he lived after Shakespeare's time, but it displays acquaintance also with the Alexandrian version of the book, so that the Semitic original must have been in existence long enough to find a place in an authorized translation like that of the LXX—*e.g.*, in 1 Mac. 1:54 we read that "they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar," meaning, no doubt, the heathen idol, and quoting the remarkable words of Dan. 11:31 as they are in the Greek. (Cf. Dan. 9:27.) So in 1 Mac. 9:40, the words *καὶ ἐπέσθον τραπεζαριαὶ πύλλων* are an echo of the Greek of Dan. 11:26, *καὶ πέσονται τραπεζαριαὶ πύλλων*, and in 1 Mac. 9:27 there is close correspondence with the language of Dan. 12:1. It seems, therefore, fairly certain that the writer of the first Book of Maccabees was acquainted with the Greek version of Daniel, which necessitates an earlier existence of the

book than the age of Antiochus Epiphanes, even if the Septuagint version itself is not of earlier date than that.

3. The narrative in Josephus (Ant. xi. 8, 5), that when Alexander the Great, in his conquering march, came to Jerusalem, the Book of Daniel was shown to him, and that he took to himself the prophecy in it that a Greek should destroy the Persian empire, and was much pleased therewith, is clear proof that in the opinion of Josephus the book was in existence then, whether or not we accept the story, while it shows that he could have known of no incident or tradition which made its existence then impossible. As a matter of historical fact, however, it is true that Alexander treated the Jews with marked favor, which gives some color of probability to the story of Josephus, and itself must be accounted for by some predisposing cause such as this would have furnished.

4. Lastly, had Daniel first appeared in Maccabean times, as the natural product of them, there would probably have been other books of a like kind, but we have no evidence of any, and therefore this book must stand entirely alone if not genuine; and however appropriate certain portions may be to the requirements of that time, it is hard to see the special bearing of others upon them, and therefore the theory of Maccabean origin, while it affords a plausible motive for some parts, offers no explanation of others which are equally characteristic, any more than it explains why the one part should have been linked so closely with the other, if it was not a whole from the beginning.

It is important to estimate these positive and substantive facts at their true value, because they seem to furnish definite material, which it is alike impossible to set aside and to reconcile with any theory of the late origin of Daniel. However we are to deal with the miraculous and prophetic elements of the book, it is at all events not fair to minimize the value of these facts in order to depreciate the ostensible importance of the miracles and prophecies contained in it. If we are honest and earnest students, therefore, we cannot ignore the fact that the external testimony, direct and indirect, to the existence of Daniel at a time antecedent to the age of Antiochus Epiphanes is very strong. It would certainly be held to be conclusive in the absence of any motives for setting it aside.

5. Another point deserves to be more carefully noted than it seems commonly to have been. We have in the prophet Ezekiel distinct reference to the existence of the prophet Daniel



in his time. In the fourteenth chapter he twice couples him with Noah and Job, as a notable instance of deliverance, and in chap. 28:3 he says of Tyre, "Behold thou art wiser than Daniel, there is no secret that they can hide from thee." Ezekiel and Daniel were contemporaries. It is plain that Ezekiel knew of Daniel as one who had either wrought some great deliverance for others or had been himself the subject of it, and also as of one who was a great revealer of secrets. Now we may not assume that Ezekiel was acquainted with the Book of Daniel, but as these are the only two references we have to Daniel in the Hebrew literature, we must either assume, if the book was late in date, that it was a story based entirely on these two meagre and fragmentary references to the history of Daniel, which were consequently sufficient to supply the foundation and framework of it, or else that more extensive traditions sufficient for supplying it were in existence, and had survived in adequate measure for the space of three centuries and a half till they suggested the remarkable compilation which we now know as the Book of Daniel.

It seems to me that this is a point that is well worthy of note, and we may be absolutely certain that the writer of Daniel in the second century before Christ either fabricated his romance entirely out of the materials supplied by Ezekiel, or else made use of traditions of which there is no trace elsewhere, or else gave the rein to his imagination to create a story in substantial agreement with the brief allusions to Daniel in Ezekiel. I do not believe that any of these courses was probable or possible, nor do I believe that the whole compass of literature supplies any case corresponding to what this would have been. The fact that certain stories, such as that of Bel and the dragon, and of Susanna, became attached to the Book of Daniel, but did not find a place in the Hebrew canon, serves at least to show that there was felt to be an intrinsic difference between them, whether it was that of age or anything else, and neither of these stories can have originated in the way it is assumed that the Book of Daniel arose from a desire to encourage the Jews when suffering under the severities of the Antiochian persecution, though indeed it is useless to speculate as to what may or may not have been the possible origin of any book whose apparent and traditional origin is disputed.

*Arguments on the Other Side.* The arguments which are advanced against the genuineness of the Book of Daniel are as follows:

The fact that its place in the Hebrew canon

is not among the prophets, but in the so-called Sacred Writings, is advanced to show that the book was not known when the division was made which consisted of the writings of the prophets. This may possibly have been made by Ezra or Nehemiah somewhere about 450 B.C., or more than one hundred years after the age of Daniel. In the Septuagint version, however, which was probably made in the third century B.C., Daniel follows Ezekiel as he does in our own version. And it is a very reasonable explanation of the place of Daniel in the Hebrew canon, that he was not officially a prophet with a distinct call, as is recorded in the case of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but only a prophet in virtue of his gifts. His book is regarded rather as an historical treatise, and therefore is classed with those of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. In like manner, though Daniel was pre-eminently a prophet and acknowledged as a prophet, he is not classed among the prophets in the canon, but is placed in the forefront of the Sacred Writings. It is obvious that these two considerations entirely neutralize any impression arising from the position of Daniel in the Hebrew canon, and fully account for it.

A second reason is conceived to exist in the silence of Jesus the son of Sirach, in Ecclesiasticus 49, when the worthies of Israel are enumerated. The entire passage extends from chap. 44 to chap. 50. Daniel, however, is not the only name omitted; no mention is made of Esther or of Mordecai, whereas Nehemiah finds his place somewhat inappropriately between Zerubbabel and Enoch. It is manifest that no valid argument can be raised on this circumstance, seeing that the entire catalogue is of a rhetorical character, and the selection made on arbitrary principles. The date of Ecclesiasticus is probably about 180-200. If, therefore, Daniel was of the age suggested, and not genuine, this would of course account for the silence of the son of Sirach, though of course it may very well arise from other causes. Clearly, if we are right in assigning the LXX translation to the third century B.C., the place of Daniel in that version is alone conclusive as furnishing positive evidence to his existence in opposition to the negative evidence deduced from the silence of the son of Sirach.

And it must always be remembered that Ezekiel was manifestly acquainted with a Daniel, whether or not the book bearing his name has a right to be received as genuine. Indeed, as I have already stated, the reference made by Ezekiel is altogether inexplicable if the Book of

Daniel is a forgery of the second century B.C. Who was the Daniel to whom Ezekiel refers? and how is it that, being so eminent as he clearly was, we know nothing whatever about him? If he was held worthy of being classed with Noah and Job, how is it that tradition was absolutely silent as to his history for some four centuries, till it suddenly blazed forth in the age of Antiochus Epiphanes with this profusion of supernatural incident and enigmatical prediction?

Thirdly, it is said that there is no mention of Daniel in Haggai, Zechariah or Malachi. But why is it necessary to suppose there should have been, considering the specific character of these writers and the brevity of their writings? There is no mention of Ezekiel in Jeremiah, or of Jeremiah in Ezekiel, though they were contemporary. To all appearance, however, this negative feature is more than neutralized by what is probably a verbal reference to Daniel in Nehemiah. The words of Nehemiah (1:5) are a reproduction of Daniel (9:4), and the peculiar phrase, "great and terrible God," is used only in Deuteronomy and in this place of Daniel. The position in which Nehemiah found himself was not unlike that of Daniel, and so far calculated to bring to his recollection the words of Daniel. In Neh. 9:32 we see also that Nehemiah has adopted an alteration of De. 7:9, which Daniel has made in 9:4. If, in the former instance, we might question which of the two was the original, there is hardly the same opportunity of doing so here, where we seem to have the result of a longer and wider experience. It is, moreover, at least probable that two of Zechariah's visions are more or less adapted and borrowed from Daniel (Zech. 1:18-21; 6:1-5), and if this is so, we have quite as much indication of acquaintance with Daniel in the post-Captivity prophets as we can reasonably expect. Indeed, the visions of Zechariah may very well be thought to lean upon those of Ezekiel and Daniel.

It has even been suggested that the frequent asseverations of truth are blinds to conceal a consciousness of falsehood on the part of the writer. This only shows the perversity of the spirit of the objector, just as, in certain chapters of Isaiah, we are asked to believe them not genuine because they do not claim to be his; whereas in chapters like the thirteenth and fourteenth, which do claim to be his, the authority of the superscription is without scruple set aside. Doubtless, had there been no vouchers for truthfulness in Daniel, that would have been advanced as an indication of spuriousness,

just as the frequency of them is construed into a tacit admission of forgery. So just and appropriate is our Lord's remark: "Wherunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the market-place and crying unto their fellows: We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." So difficult is it to conceive the circumstances in which the excuse for objection should not arise.

It is to be remembered that, with regard to the Book of Daniel, the question as to its date lies only between the actual date, which we may suppose to be that of the old age of Daniel, or about the middle of the sixth century B.C., and that of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes (163 B.C.), a distance of more than three centuries and a half. No other date has ever been suggested; but it is not hard to see that, even conceding the latter date as the true one, there is a distinct prophecy as early as the second chapter, which probably reappears afterward, that renders absolutely futile any such hypothesis, for it is not possible to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream without perceiving that the rise of the Christian Church as a kingdom that should last forever is definitely promised therein.

Of course, in the case of any prophecy, no matter how close its correspondence with what purports to be its fulfilment, it is always possible, on *a priori* grounds, to affirm that the fulfilment does not establish the prophecy because we cannot be certain that it was so fulfilled. The correspondence may be fortuitous, but for all that there is a natural inability in the human mind to reject the inference which forces itself on us in consequence of any such correspondence, especially when repeated again and again. An aggregate of threads, each of which may be weak in itself, is yet strong enough to hold the mind enchained; and there can be no doubt that prophecy may not only be regarded as one of such threads, but also that this particular prophecy is really one of the strongest of them; and though it may be unwise to dwell with too great exclusiveness even on this indication of antecedent design, it is equally unwise to shut our eyes altogether to the cogency of it.

The Book of Daniel, like that of Ezra, is written partly in Hebrew and partly, as already stated, in the Aramaic dialect, commonly called Chaldee. Some have affirmed that the Chaldee of Daniel is a disguised imitation of that of Ezra; but sufficient linguistic differences have been pointed out to negative this assumption. These

differences are, indeed, slight, and the Chaldee of Ezra and Daniel is more nearly alike than that of either is to the language of the oldest of the Chaldee Targums. There is reason to believe that neither the Hebrew nor the Chaldee of Daniel was in use in the time of the Maccabees, and hence the notion of a Maccabean origin for the Book of Daniel is rendered the more improbable.

To any one who is at all open to belief, the question of the genuineness of Daniel is decided by the fact that there are two prophecies in the book which no hypothesis of its late origin can at all account for: these are the prophecies of the fifth empire and that of the seventy weeks. If there is any meaning at all in 2 : 44 ; 7 : 27, it can only be the promise of a vast and permanent spiritual kingdom, such as that which claims to have been founded by Christ. It is, humanly speaking, as unlikely that this should have been foreseen in the second century as in the sixth before Christ; and still more unlikely is it that a person writing in the second century before Christ the kind of imaginary fiction this book would have been, should have framed so lofty a conception as this, and have put it into the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar, and have asserted it so confidently. And the same may be said of the prophecy of the seventy weeks. This is absolutely unintelligible on the supposition of its late origin; whereas if it is part, as it professes to be, of a Divine vision, it is not only susceptible of a marvellously minute interpretation, but seems to have furnished the only conceivable basis upon which our Lord declared, when He commenced His ministry, that the time was fulfilled; for in the whole compass of Scripture there is nothing to show that the Messianic hopes and promises were to be fulfilled in the age of Christ—who claimed to have fulfilled them—more than at any other time, and yet we have independent evidence that, at that time, there was a very general impression that they were then to be fulfilled.

It is for these reasons, then, that we regard the Book of Daniel as a genuine work of the age of Daniel, and as coming to us with his authority and sanction. *Leathes.*

With respect to the genuineness and authenticity of this Book of Daniel there is abundance both of external and of internal evidence. Of external evidence there is all that can well be had or desired in a case of this nature: not only the testimony of the whole Jewish Church and nation, who have constantly received this book as canonical; but of Josephus particularly,

who recommends him as the greatest of the prophets; of the Jewish Targums and Talmuds, which frequently cite and appeal to his authority; of Paul and John, who have copied many of his prophecies; of our Saviour Himself, who citeth his words and styleth him "Daniel the prophet;" of ancient historians, who relate many of the same transactions; of the mother of the seven sons and of the father of the Maccabees, who both recommend the example of Daniel to their sons; of old Eleazar in Egypt, who, praying for the Jews then suffering under the persecution of Ptolemy Philopator (3 Mac. 7 : 6, 7), mentions the deliverance of Daniel out of the den of lions, together with the deliverance of the three men out of the fiery furnace; of the Jewish high-priest, who showed Daniel's prophecies to Alexander the Great while he was at Jerusalem; and still higher, of Ezekiel, a contemporary writer, who greatly extols his piety and wisdom. Nor is the internal less powerful and convincing than the external evidence, for the language, the style, the manner of writing, and all other internal marks and characters are perfectly agreeable to that age; and he appears plainly and undeniably to have been a prophet by the exact accomplishment of his prophecies, as well those which have already been fulfilled as those which are now fulfilling in the world. *Bp. Newton.*—To reject the prophecies of Daniel is to reject the Christian religion; for this religion is founded upon his prophecy concerning the Messiah (*Sir Isaac Newton*); but to read this book with attention and intelligence, and with an unbiassed mind to follow the advice of our Saviour when He quoted this very prophecy, "Let him that readeth understand," might be sufficient to convert an unbeliever from deism to Christianity. *Bp. Watson.*

The prophecies of Daniel are in a style of which the Old Testament offers no precisely similar example; but when the choice is proposed between two alternatives: shall this be explained—so far as critical considerations alone are concerned—from the facts of the age and circumstances in which it professes to have been composed, or by the help of a theory which counts the prophecies of the book the work of a "romancer" inspired by ardent patriotism, or feverish zeal, or exuberant imagination? there can be but little doubt whether facts or theory will be preferred. Facts point to a writer bred in Babylonia, as the author; theories to a Maccabean. The facts recorded agree with other facts proved to be true, and with that probability which, according to Laplace,

has "reference partly to our ignorance, partly to our knowledge," and is consequently a certain gauge of credibility. It is now simply impossible to condemn offhand as fictions or inventions the historical statements put forward in the Book of Daniel. They can be measured, in the majority of cases, by their agreement or disagreement with the facts, practices, manners, and customs brought to light by cuneiform discovery. The "records of the past" are only partly open to the student; but quite enough is in his hands to enable him to compare still undecided historical allegations with proved historical facts, and by the comparative method of criticism obtain inferences which are, if negative, circumstantial and sound. . . .

In conclusion, the broad truth stands out that "the coloring of the narrative is exactly Babylonian. The details of the manners and customs of the Babylonian court are given with an exactitude, remarkably confirmed by the monuments, which no writer in Palestine of the third or second century B.C. could have possibly attained." Positive and negative evidences all tend to the same conclusion. The message is often that of "sealed words" (12 : 9), but in the utterance of the message a real man appears. No one can take up this inspired book without finding in it true marks of authenticity. There is historical accuracy and spiritual profit, and not that puerility of fiction or merely intellectual stimulant which would have marked the work had it been a production of the Maccabean period. B. C.

The one fact of importance is that we find a settled canon and arrangement of the sacred Scriptures universally accepted by the Jews long before the time of our Lord; a general consent that Malachi was the last inspired prophet; and numerous traditions, more or less trustworthy, throwing light upon the manner in which the canon was formed. And we receive the Book of Daniel as being one of those Scriptures which the Jews received into their canon. The books of the Old Testament come down to us with a great weight of authority to back them, just as those of the New Testament come with all the authority of the councils of the Church in the fourth century. We do not say that either the Jewish rabbins or the doctors of the Church could not make a mistake; but we do say that this mistake must be clearly proved before we reverse their decision. Too generally, modern criticism has ignored this fact, and men have written as if their fancies and notions were as solid grounds for forming a judgment as the full knowledge possessed

by the Jews and by the fathers of the fourth century, who performed for the writings of the apostles that same work of careful discrimination which the men of the great synagogue performed, after the return from exile, for the Hebrew Scriptures. Lay whatever stress you like upon the fact that the admission of a book into the canon of Scripture was the work of men, yet it remains that it was done by men who were competent for the task, and that their judgment has stood the test of ages. R. P. S.

The testimony of the New Testament is, to a Christian, of higher, truer value than any other. The Book of the Revelation proves how powerful an influence the Book of Daniel exercised over the mind of the "beloved disciple." Paul's description of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2 : 4); his delegating the judgment of the world to God's saints (2 Cor. 6 : 2), have a distinct reference, verbal and doctrinal, to the teaching of this prophetic book. The allusions to the safety of God's prophet when cast into the den of lions, and to the deliverance of the "three children" (Heb. 11 : 33, 34), can be understood of none others than those whose perils are described in the canonical work. The title, "Son of Man," which broke from the lips of the dying Stephen, was the same as that claimed by the Holy One, itself reflected to Him from the pages of the prophet.

The Saviour's discourses upon His second coming contain allusions to the Book of Daniel too distinct to be mistaken. But He does not confine Himself to allusions. In one memorable passage He refutes by anticipation every cavil against Daniel. He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the Holy City at His feet, His disciples around Him. In a few momentous words He foretold the destruction of that temple which rose before Him in all its peerless beauty. As He spake of it He gave them the token which should be the signal of their own dispersion. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, . . . then let them which be in Judea flee," etc. The words have but one plain meaning and one plain reference. As spoken by Christ, they invest with dignity and inspiration the author He is quoting. This can be maintained without for a moment excluding the legitimate use of intelligent and scientific criticism. Christ has said nothing which shall bind us to believe that Daniel reduced the book to its present form, but He has said that which forbids us to believe its author a Maccabean scribe or an Egyptian enthusiast. It was a

caution impressed by Theodoret on the Jews of his day who rejected the Book of Daniel: "Remember that in warring against the prophet you are warring through the prophet against the Lord of the prophet." The caution is neither superfluous nor unnecessary to day. The Lord of that prophet hath borne testimony to the words of His prophet by the mouth of His holy Son. Christians accept that testimony for the reason given by Thomas Aquinas:

"Credo quicquid dixit Dei Filius,  
Nil hoc Verbo veritatis verius."

The opinion advanced by the Holy One of God, and followed by His apostles, is in full accordance with the mind and teaching of the early Jewish and Christian Churches. B. C.

The Lord speaks of Daniel as of a divinely inspired man, who prophesied events which were yet future to Him and His disciples, and, therefore, reach far beyond the time of Antiochus. In Luke 1:19-26 there is the appearance of the angel Gabriel, who occurs nowhere else in Holy Scripture but in Dan. 8:9. The first chapter of Luke confirms the objective truth of Daniel's angelology against the supposition that it was a product of later conceptions, borrowed from Parsism. Thus our book enjoys the express testimony of the New Testament on those very three points which have been the greatest stumbling-block to modern criticism: the predictions, narratives of miracles, and appearances of angels contained in it. Jesus and His apostles looked on Daniel as a true prophet of God, and on his writings as recounting real and Divine miracles and prophecies, and that in a sense severely attacked by modern criticism, and diametrically opposed to it. *Auberlen*.

The leading grounds on which modern critics reject the book are the alleged "fabulousness of its narratives," and "the minuteness of its prophetic history." "The contents of the book," it is said, "are irrational and impossible" (*Hitzig*). Such critics, of course, deny inspiration, reject miracles, and set aside as repugnant to reason everything that is Divine or supernatural in the Scriptures or elsewhere. Generally it may be said that while the book presents in many respects a startling and exceptional character, yet it is far more difficult to explain its composition in the Maccabean period than to connect the peculiarities which it exhibits with the exigencies of the return. *Dic. B.*

Objections to the authenticity of the book were advanced very early. Porphyry (A.D.

233-302) may be called the father of the objectors. In the twelfth volume of a work against the Christians, now lost, he strove to refute the claims of Daniel to the rank of prophecy. He asserted that the book was not composed by him whose name was attached to it, but by some writer who lived in Judea in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. He urged that it did not speak of things future so much as narrate the events of the past. In fact, that whatever event it recorded up to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes was true history, but all beyond that date was false, as the writer must of necessity have been unacquainted with futurity. Therefore, was the conclusion, the book was written in the age of that king. Porphyry's argument, founded upon a disbelief in prophecy, was natural in a heathen writer, and could logically lead to no other conclusion. Jerome, when reproducing the most forcible of his objections, either appended to each the direct or indirect refutation, or pointed out the way to a sounder mode of interpretation than was possible to a non-Christian mind.

For many years the question slumbered. It was not till the beginning of the present century that Bertholdt (in 1803) gave an extended and critical basis to the more or less timid opposition of the Dutchman Spinoza, the Englishman Hobbes, the Spaniard Acosta, the German Semler, and their pupils at home and abroad. And from Bertholdt's day to the present the Book of Daniel has been banished from the "authentic" lists of the Old Testament canon proffered by Gesenius, De Wette, Ewald, Hitzig, Bunsen, Bleek, Graf, Schrader, Grätz, and their followers. These critics unite in fixing the date of the composition of the book in the age of Antiochus Epiphanes; and assign it to some scribe who assumed the name Daniel as a *nom de plume*, that name being the name of one of Ezekiel's most illustrious contemporaries (chap. 14), and also that of a contemporary of Ezra (8:1, 2) and Nehemiah. Further, the book was not written in Babylon, but in the Holy Land, and probably at Jerusalem. The prophecies and miracles, singly or unitedly, have furnished to them as to Porphyry the primary objections to Daniel. Philological peculiarities, alleged historical inaccuracies, *argumenta e silentio*, have had more or less weight with some as secondary and complementary objections, but the "too accurate predictions," and the "irrational and impossible" character of the miracles, have been the main difficulties felt in perusing the book. B. C.

The denial proceeds on the assumption that

prediction is impossible, and that, therefore, the visions of Daniel must have been written after the events had taken place, and by an unknown writer, who fictitiously attributed them to Daniel in order to give them currency; in other words, the book is a literary forgery. But this brings the composition down to 170 B.C., and assumes that the custodians of the Old Testament Scriptures were easily duped by the anonymous and apocryphal document, for only forty years after this we find the book in the completed Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament begun 285 B.C. Place it only ten years earlier, and the predictive element remains. It has been a fierce, critical battle that has been waged over the Book of Daniel, but the victory remains with those who maintain its historical character, and who contend that it was written either by Daniel himself or by some one who acted as Daniel's literary editor. The predictions are credible for him who believes God to be omniscient and revelation to be possible. The miracles, too, are rational as impressive manifestations of the power and purpose of God to deliver His faithful servants in an age when idolatry and monotheism were locked in the grapple of life and death. *Behrends*.

The spuriousness of Daniel has, for its sole support, only the theological doubts of the possibility of prophecy in general, and of a prophecy so minute in particular. The historical and philological arguments against its genuineness have been sufficiently refuted by Hengstenberg and Hävernick. *Ehrhard*.—Within the last thirty years (1861) Hengstenberg, Sack, Oehler, Hävernick, Reichel, Schulze, Herbst, Vaihinger, Delitzsch, Auberlen, Zundel, Kurtz, Keil, Hoffman, Drechsel, and Baumgarten have stood forward as vindicators of the genuineness of Daniel's prophecies, while Niebuhr has defended the accuracy of his chronological statements. *McClul*.

#### *Points in Evidence of Genuineness.*

1. That the Daniel of the age of the Captivity was a very prominent man in Jewish history. Even King David was scarcely more so. He was known to all intelligent Jews of that age and onward into later times. Far above all other Jews of his time, he was the distinguished man—prime-minister in the courts successively of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, and promoted to the very highest rank by Belshazzar just on the eve of his final fall. Obviously not the doings only of such a man, but his writings, must be matters of public notoriety. By

how much the more prominent the man, and by how much the more highly esteemed among his countrymen, by so much the greater would be the difficulty of putting forth forgeries in his name successfully during his lifetime, or at any period while his name would be worth using in a forged production; and hence by so much the greater would be the certainty that written documents purporting to be from him would be genuine.

2. This Book of Daniel, in both its historic and prophetic parts, is closely interwoven with his actual life. It is not easy to conceive how any book could be more so. Both the outer and the inner life of the man stand out in his writings with remarkable distinctness. There is not a word in the whole book that does not fit naturally and closely to the life, to the heart, and to the whole character of this prominent man, Daniel of the Captivity. Hence the assumption that this book is a forgery, gotten up three hundred and seventy years after the latest record of his life, is violently improbable—not to say utterly incredible.

3. The languages in which the book is written determine its age, proving that it must have been written during, or very near, the Captivity, and completely disproving the fiction of Porphyry. The facts are that the portion (chaps. 2: 4-7; 28) is in Chaldee; all the rest in Hebrew. Now the period of the Captivity is the only one during the whole range of Jewish history in which one of the Jewish sacred books could have been written thus, a part in each tongue. For all Scripture was written for the common people and primarily for the people then living. This was the only period in the entire national history of the Jews in which they understood both these languages. Again, this was the only period in which the Chaldee portion could have been reasonably written, for the benefit of the Chaldean people. Let any man intelligent in history think of the Chaldee portion of Daniel as written for the Chaldean people in the age of Antiochus Epiphanes! The idea is simply absurd. Babylon had then almost ceased to be. Its relations to Nebuchadnezzar were all forgotten by its population. In the Book of Ezra, chap. 5 throughout, portions of chaps. 4, 6 and 7 are in Chaldee, and a verse or two in Jeremiah; but these prophets were substantially in the same age with Daniel.

4. Some of the salient points in the history found in this book are referred to in subsequent Jewish history prior to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in a way which renders it nearly

certain that the book itself was then extant. In 1 Mac. 2 : 51-60 the venerable Mattathias of Moden, himself then near death, exhorts his sons to "call to remembrance what acts their fathers did in their time ;" alludes successively to Abraham, Joseph, Phineas, Joshua, Caleb, David and Elijah ; and then adds : "Ananias, Azarias and Misael, by believing, were saved out of the flame. Daniel, for his innocency, was saved from the mouth of lions." These words were spoken by Mattathias *before* the date fixed by these German critics for the writing of the Book of Daniel. I maintain that there is the strongest presumption for the existence of this book long before the death of Epiphanes, even as there is of the other histories drawn from in this same speech.

5. Josephus is a valuable Jewish witness. A man of eminent learning, in very high repute among his countrymen, the author of a full and very elaborate history of the Jewish nation from Abraham down to the destruction of their city by the Romans (A.D. 70) ; born A.D. 37 and publishing his works in the latter part of the first century ; his testimony to the current opinions of his nation cannot be impeached. He speaks (Ant. XII. 7 : 6) of the prophecies of Daniel as being "uttered four hundred and eight years before"—*i.e.*, before the events in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. He also says (Ant. X. 11 : 7), "All these things, he (Daniel) left in writing, God exhibiting them to him, so that those who read, observant of the events, must needs look on Daniel with wonder on account of the honor done to him by God." The fiction of these modern German critics is squarely confronted by this testimony of Josephus.

6. There can be scarcely a doubt that the Book of Daniel was translated into the Septuagint one hundred years before the German sceptics admit it to have existed. Some points in respect to the authors of this celebrated version and to its production remain considerably obscure ; but there is no ground for doubt that it was made within the reigns of the first two Ptolemies in the Greek-Egyptian dynasty, and at the request and with the aid of these two kings. Their reigns fill the period B.C. 323-246. The Pentateuch was brought out first, and about B.C. 285. It might be difficult to show when the whole work was completed, or when the translation of Daniel was made. But the whole was manifestly carried through in the same general movement, for the same common purposes and objects, and hence, in all probability, without unnecessary delay. *The Book of*

*Daniel was in that version.* It must, therefore, with the highest probability have been translated before B.C. 163. It is not conceivable that one hundred and twenty years could have been occupied in completing this work.

7. The Book of Daniel was brought into the accepted canon of the Old Testament Scriptures not later than the close of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus (B.C. 474-424)—*i.e.*, not far from three hundred years before the death of Epiphanes. Here Josephus is a competent witness. He says : "We have not a countless number of books, discordant and arrayed against each other, but only twenty-two books, which are justly accredited as Divine." Hence the canon of books accepted as inspired comes down through the reign of Artaxerxes, but no further. The twenty-two books of our accepted Old Testament, Daniel included, were all written, according to Josephus, before that reign closed—*i.e.*, say at least before B.C. 400.

8. It is remarkable that the time assigned by these German critics for the writing of this Book of Daniel was one in which the leading Jews knew they had no prophet among them—knew they had not had one for many years past—and could not expect one for many years to come. That is, the existing state of opinion was thoroughly adverse both to the writing and to the reception of such a forgery as they claim this book to be.

The arguments thus far adduced against the great central position of the critics in question have designedly been of that historical and critical sort which those who impugn Daniel usually delight to honor. It seemed well, first of all, to meet them on their own ground. It remains to adduce yet one argument which those who recognize the Divine mission of Jesus Christ as the great Teacher sent from God, will surely honor. Our Divine Lord Himself refers (Matt. 24 : 15, 16) to Daniel and to this book of his, in these words : "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand). Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." But it will be asked, What do these sceptical critics say in support of their positions ? To support their main, central position, they begin with denying the fact of any inspired prophecy either here or elsewhere, and resolving all predictions of future events into human sagacity or unfounded anticipations. But inasmuch as this Book of Daniel records as prophecy a long series of very minute historic events far in the future (*e.g.*, in chaps. 11

and S), as well as the general succession of great dynasties—too much to be attributed to human sagacity—they insist that the book must have been written *after* these events took place. This they maintain is the common law of historical criticism. If an ancient book of history should come to light, all critics would settle the question of its date on the assumption that it was written later than the events it records. I reply, this is very true of what is merely human history; not at all true of divinely inspired prophecy. The fact of a really Divine inspiration constitutes a bold exception. The plausibility of this modern plea against Daniel lies in its tacitly ignoring this distinction.

All the other points made in the attack upon Daniel are trivial; that the book contains some Greek words and some Persian; that part of it is written in Chaldee and part in Hebrew; that the tone of the composition is peculiar—unlike that of the other prophets; that its miracles are grotesque, and its ideas respecting angels, the Messiah, and an ascetic life indicate unmistakably a late age; and finally that Daniel speaks too well of himself, and was too young to stand so high as he appears in Ezekiel.

The candid and intelligent reader will readily see that these points are trivial. For there are not more Greek or Persian words here than ought to be expected in an author living and writing in the great commercial and political centre of the known world. For this known world at that time practically embraced both Greece and Persia. There were the best of reasons for writing some portions in Chaldee—viz., the special benefit of the Chaldean people. If the book had been written wholly in Hebrew, a much stronger objection could be raised against it, as scarcely credible in view of the author's relations to the Chaldean people, government, and language. On the other hand, there were some good reasons for writing some of it in Hebrew. Further, the east of the book is unobjectionable. True, it is part history and part prophecy; but it is all the more useful for this; was all needed at the time, and needed from this author. True, he uses *symbols*; but so did Ezekiel and Zechariah—prophets nearest his age and of most similar surroundings: and (what is not less worthy of note) his symbols are remarkably Chaldean, as recent discoveries most abundantly attest. Yet further, its miracles, so far from being "grotesque," are morally grand and solemnly impressive. Note how the salvation of those three men in the furnace and of Daniel in the den of lions affected in each case the king on his throne.

Evidently, if this book is not reliably accurate as history, there is a somewhat strong presumption in favor of its being written at a later date. If it be a forgery of later date, written by some unknown hand and *after* the fulfilment of its apparent prophecies, its religious value to us becomes nothing, and painful doubts are thrown upon the reliability of other canonical Scriptures. But if this book is historically true, then it was no doubt written by the Daniel of the Captivity. If written by him, it contains most wonderful prophecy and becomes its own witness to its Divine inspiration. Thus the general truth of its history confirms its genuineness and authenticity, rescues it from the ruthless hands of mistaken critics, and gives it back to the church and to mankind, its proofs brightened and its reliability confirmed by the ordeal of this fiery furnace of hypercriticism. When this book of Daniel becomes fully and justly known it will appear that in respect to both its history and its prophecy it interlaces itself so perfectly, not only with the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New, but with all contemporary and subsequent history at least down to the Christian era, that no violence can wrench it away. Its position is such among the pillars of the great temple of truth that none can pluck it down without laying the temple itself in ruins. If there be any reliable history of the ages, then is this book reliable. Its prophecies have mostly become history; itself came forth from the Spirit of God. H. C.

It cannot even be imagined at what period, according to this theory, the author wrote the book. If he wrote before the death of Antiochus, how is it that he was so intimately acquainted with all the circumstances preceding that event that he predicted it to the very day? If he wrote after his death, how could he possibly connect with this event his Messianic dreams? But in either case the book, with its Messianic prophecies, would have been rejected soon after its appearance, on account of the evident falseness of its predictions. How, then, can it be accounted for that it attained canonical dignity?

Further, the modern theory is incompatible, in the most essential points, with the text itself; it is not capable of entering into the manifold riches and depth, especially of the first part of the sacred prophecy. The fulness of Scripture cannot be bounded and circumscribed by so narrow and meagre a scheme. And this will appear yet more evident when we consider the individual features of the monarchies. If the modern view of our book and



its object is not capable of accounting for the full and lengthy mention made of the world-kings in general, it is still less able to account for the manner in which the individual kingdoms are treated. The theorists cannot explain why the first and second parts are at all different; why the supposed writer, from his Maccabean standpoint, looks back to different epochs—in the second and seventh chapters to the Babylonian kingdom, in the eighth only as far as the Medo-Persian, in the seventh no further than the Persian. They cannot explain why, in the first-mentioned two chapters, there are four, in both the others but two monarchies enumerated; and in connection with this they cannot give a satisfactory reason why the eighth chapter speaks of the Medo-Persian kingdoms as one; while, in the second and seventh chapters, according to their view, it is analyzed into two. Taking the book as genuine, and as what it asserts itself to be, we have a simple and natural answer to all these questions, in the different times in which the revelations were vouchsafed, and in the different objects of the first and second parts. The revelation of the eighth chapter took place in the third year of Belshazzar, a time in which the Babylonian empire was decaying so rapidly, that it neither required nor deserved a more minute consideration. The revelations of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth chapters were given to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus, and thus neither the Babylonians nor even the Medians needed to be mentioned; consequently the kingdoms here spoken of are Persia and Greece (10: 13, 20; 11: 2).

Even if we admit that the author might go back to ancient kingdoms, in order to attain to a certain fulness and completeness in his enumeration of previous world kingdoms, we must find it strange, as is hinted by Ewald, that he did not mention also the Assyrian, perhaps even the Egyptian kingdom. A man living in the days of the Maccabees, looking back on the previous sufferings which Israel had to bear from the world power, had no particular reason for choosing to begin with the Babylonian kingdom first, as little reason as to leave it out in the later chapters. But who can avoid seeing, in this very circumstance, that the Babylonian kingdom is mentioned as the first—a new and important proof that the date of our book is that of the Babylonian exile, and that on the supposition of the genuineness of Daniel, a multitude of phenomena actually lying before us, and which must remain unaccounted for and unintelligible to modern criticism, are seen

to have a rational basis. We have seen in our first chapter that the reason why Daniel begins with the Babylonian kingdom was not merely his external, personal, and historical position, but an inner reason, related to the whole development of the history of revelation. For it was from the beginning of the Babylonian exile that the existence of an independent theocracy on earth ceased, and is not restored even to this hour; the empire of the world powers still endures.

According to the view adopted by modern criticism, the Book of Daniel furnishes us merely with a fragment of political history from Nebuchadnezzar to Antiochus Epiphanes; according to our view—that is, according to what the book says of itself—it intends to represent something infinitely deeper and more sublime—viz., *the relation of the two fundamental powers of universal history, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, from the time when the kingdom of God ceases to exist as a separate state till the time when it shall be re-established as such in glory.* And thus our book becomes truly a prophetic, and hence a canonical book, since it places all detail and individual history in the light of the whole development of the Divine plan of salvation, and the government of the world, and reaches even unto the end of time. *Auberlen.*

#### *Use of Hebrew and Chaldee.*

The alternate use of Hebrew and Chaldee is the main linguistic peculiarity of the Book of Daniel, and is indicative of a date when he who wrote it was familiar with both. It certainly has the effect of externally placing the book among the writings of the Captivity; Jeremiah and Ezra being the only two canonical works connected with that period which exhibit a similar union.

The Hebrew and Chaldee present respectively undoubted peculiarities, at the same time that they suggest as their author such a man as the Daniel of Scripture is described to be. The circumstances of his life and education are more than sufficient to account for his style and diction. The Hebrew is the Hebrew of the Captivity.

The "Chaldee" of the Bible (Dan. 2: 4 to chap. 7, end; Ezra 4: 8 to 6: 18; 7: 12-26; Jer. 10: 11; Gen. 31: 47 has two words) contains the oldest existing remains of the oldest Aramaic speech. Aramaic has two dialects, west and east Aramaic, and the latter is the name given to the language which became

current among the Jews during and after the Captivity. B. C.

It is at chap. 2:4 that the Chaldee is first used, wrongly called in our version Syriac, but in the original Aramaic, the common dialect of all the descendants of Aram (Gen. 10:23). Really Syriac and Chaldee are simply dialects of Aramaic, but the former is best known to us as a Christian tongue famous for the translations made into it of the Scriptures, and for the works of the great writers of the schools of Edessa and Nisibis, beginning with Ephrem Syrus in the fourth century, and ending with Gregory Bar Hebreus in the thirteenth; while Chaldee had a literature partly heathen and partly Jewish, having maintained in Palestine the ascendancy which it obtained over the Jews while living at Babylon.

The exact comparison of the Chaldee of Daniel with that of Ezra has clearly proved that they are of the same age, while, nevertheless, there are sufficient points of difference to show that the one is not an imitation of the other. In both the influence of pure Hebrew is strongly marked; while in the Targums, which were not actually committed to writing till about the time of the Christian era, though most of the matter was more ancient, having been handed down by oral tradition in the schools of the scribes, the differences from the language and style of Daniel and Ezra are very large, and there is a complete absence of all Hebraisms. A careful examination, moreover, of the Hebrew of Daniel justifies Keil in the assertion, as "an incontrovertible fact, that it bears the closest affinity to the language of the writings in the exile, especially Ezekiel's." It was only during the time of the exile that there was any occasion for using both languages, or the probability that a writer would be equally skilled in their use. R. P. S.

The language of the book, no less than its general form, belongs to an era of transition. Like Ezra, Daniel is composed partly in the vernacular Aramaic (Chaldee) and partly in the sacred Hebrew. The introduction (chaps. 1 to 2:4 a) is written in Hebrew. On the occasion of the Syriac (*i.e.*, Aramaic) answer of the Chaldeans, the language changes to Aramaic, and this is retained till the close of the seventh chapter (chaps. 2:4 b to 7). The personal introduction of Daniel as the writer of the text (8:1) is marked by the resumption of the Hebrew, which continues to the close of the book (chaps. 8 to 12). The character of the Hebrew bears the closest affinity to that of Ezekiel and Habakkuk. The Aramaic, like that of Ezra,

is also of an earlier form than exists in any other Chaldaic document. The use of Greek technical terms marks a period when commerce had already united Persia and Greece; and the occurrence of peculiar words which admit of an explanation by reference to Aryan and not to Shemitic roots is almost inexplicable on the supposition that the prophecies are a Palestinian forgery of the Maccabean age. *Die. B.*

#### *The History Illustrated by the Tablets.*

The writer of great part of the book, if not even of the whole, becomes the very first person in the kingdom next to the king, and lives and prospers under four monarchs, called respectively, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius. We have thus a considerable body of Babylonian history in this book; and numerous points present themselves on which some illustration of the history from profane sources is possible. Take the character of Nebuchadnezzar's court. It is vast and complicated, elaborate in its organization, careful in its etiquette, magnificent in its ceremonial. Among the most important personages in it are a class who profess to have the power of expounding dreams, and generally foretelling future events by means of magic, sorcery, and astrology (chap. 2:2, 10, 27, etc.). Next to these are the civil administrators, "princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, councillors, sheriffs, and rulers of provinces" (chap. 3:2), who are specially summoned to attend in full numbers on certain grand occasions. The king is waited on by eunuchs, sometimes of royal descent, who are subjected to a three years' careful training, and are under the superintendence of a "master of the eunuchs," who is an officer of high position (chap. 1:3-5). The monarch has, of course, a "body-guard," which is under the command of a "captain" (chap. 2:14), another high official. Music is used at the court in ceremonials, and is apparently of an advanced kind, the bands comprising performers on at least six different musical instruments (chap. 3:5, 7, 10, etc.). The Babylonian and Assyrian remains amply illustrate most of these particulars. Magic holds a most important place in both nations, and the monarchs set a special value on it. Their libraries contained hundreds of tablets, copied with the utmost care, on which were recorded the exorcisms, the charms, the talismans and the astronomical prognostics, which had come down from a remote antiquity, and which were implicitly believed in. The celestial phenomena were constantly observed, and reports sent to the court

from the observatories, which formed the groundwork of confident predictions. Eclipses were especially noted, and, according to the month and day of their occurrence, were regarded as portending events, political, social, or meteorological.

The position of the king in the Babylonian court as absolute lord and master of the lives and liberties even of the greatest of his subjects, able to condemn to death, not only individuals (chap. 3: 19), but a whole class, and that class the highest in the State (chap. 2: 12-14), is thoroughly in accordance with all that profane history tells us of the Babylonian governmental system. In Oriental monarchies it was not always so. The writer of the Book of Daniel shows a just appreciation of the difference between the Babylonian and the Medo-Persian systems, when he makes Darius the Mede influenced by his nobles, and compelled to do things against his will by a "law of the Medes and Persians, which altered not" (chap. 6: 14-17); while Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian is wholly untrammelled, and does not seem even to consult his lords on matters where the highest interests of the State are concerned. Babylonian and Assyrian monarchs were absolute in the fullest sense of the word. No traditional "law" restrained them. Their nobility was an official nobility, like that of Turkey at the present day. They themselves raised it to power; and it lay with them to degrade its members at their pleasure. Officers such as the tartan, or "commander-in-chief," the rabschach, or "chief cup-bearer," and the rabsaris, or "chief eunuch," held the highest positions (2 K. 18: 17)—mere creatures of the king, whom a "breath had made," and a breath could as easily "unmake." The kings, moreover, claimed to be of Divine origin, and received Divine honors. G. R.

*Other Points Touching the Scope and Usefulness of the Book.*

The Book of Daniel comprises the whole time of the servitude and dispersion of the holy people. Hence the importance of this book, and its great use for our times. But this period is described not only by Daniel, but also by Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi; also, the evangelists and apostles lived during this period, and both as prophets and teachers they speak of its peculiarities. There is, moreover, no book in the Old Testament in which mention is not made of this period, for all the prophecies of Christ's incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension, as also the prophe-

cies relating to the dispersion of Israel, refer to this time. But Daniel has this advantage, that he lived at the beginning of this period, and that he described it to its end. *Ross.*

In the Book of Daniel the vast drama of Gentile history is claimed for God, and the grand stream of the world's onward progress is set before us as possessing an intrinsic value, and therefore as the fitting object of God's providence. And Daniel held just the position which made him the right person thus to vindicate for God the whole course of human events. A Jew by birth, intensely patriotic, devoted to the observance of the Jewish law, constant in his prayers for his people, he was also the president of a learned heathen caste and the vizier of a Gentile king. The conduct of the affairs of a mighty empire must have daily brought him into business relations with other men, and the narrow prejudices which grow up in isolation must have melted before the warmer feelings and larger interests which arise out of a more extensive knowledge of human affairs and a closer contact with men. To Daniel the Jewish Church and nation were of all things those which he most prized, but he knew the worth also and importance of God's empire over the heathen world. R. P. S.

As it had been the habit of the prophets to connect in their visions the glories of the latter days with the blessings of the immediate future, they placed no interval between their picture of the return from captivity and the description of the times of the Messiah. The people, giving a chronological interpretation to this connection, imagined that the restoration of Jerusalem would immediately precede the coming of the Christ. But a larger horizon spread before the eyes of Daniel; and the aim of his ministry was to inspire into Israel a new virtue—that of calmness in expectation, of faith taking the form of perseverance.

Under Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel had had a vision of the unfolding of history up to the coming of the Messiah, under many grand phases—stages in the journey of humanity in search of its lost unity. In the colossal image, "whose head was of gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, and his feet part of iron and part of clay," he had recognized four forms of terrestrial power, hostile to God, which were to succeed each other before the coming of Christ. Then, in the little stone, cut out from the mountain without hands, which had smitten and overturned the image and taken its place, becoming a great mountain which filled the

whole earth, he had discerned without difficulty the kingdom of the Messiah, feeble at its beginning, but growing through the Divine power, and taking the place of all other powers. And who could fail to see the wonderful correspondence between this prophetic picture and the general course of history? At the very moment when the last and mightiest of the heathen monarchies was swallowing up the remains of all the preceding ones, and gathering together under one rule all the nations of the world, a Child of obscure parentage was born in Bethlehem and grew up at Nazareth. It was the power of the Spirit which was then making its appearance and becoming incarnate in a Man, soon to come into collision with the brutality of earthly power. The shock took place, and we know its effects. The image has crumbled to pieces; the little stone is uninjured and still growing. The trial, it is true, is not yet over; but the results of experience are before us, to enable us to foresee the realization of the end described in the prophetic vision.

Thus, then, four great empires are to succeed each other from the time of Daniel to that of the Messiah on the stage of the world. Daniel contemplates them over again in the vision related in chap. 7 under the image of the four living creatures which he beholds emerging in succession from the waters of the sea—that is, from the midst of heathendom—and which vanish to make room for the one only eternal kingdom—that of which the figure of the Son of man is the emblem. *Godet.*

We have in the Book of Daniel a necessary link between the Old and New Testament, and its development of doctrine as regards the abolition of the Jewish dispensation, the universality of Christ's kingdom, the resurrection of the dead and the general judgment, is as indispensable for the unity of Holy Scripture as Isaiah's development of doctrine with regard to the efficacy of Christ's atonement. It remains only to add that no single trace of Maccabean feeling can be found in it. The time of the Maccabees was intensely Jewish in its sympathies; the Book of Daniel is cosmopolitan. The Maccabees, wronged and persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes, hated the Gentiles with hearty abomination; the Book of Daniel regards them with large-hearted affection. In the Maccabean age the people mourned over the absence of the prophetic spirit and the withdrawal of all external signs of God's presence; the Book of Daniel belongs to a time when prophecy and miracle are still things of the present, vouchsafed upon all worthy occa-

sions. And when we take into consideration the historical accuracy of the book, its thorough acquaintance with the minutest details of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires, its perfect mastery both of the Hebrew and the Chaldee languages, and the deep interest it displays in the fortunes of heathen empires, we may feel quite certain that such a work was no product of Maccabean times. There was neither knowledge enough then, nor largeness of heart enough for such a work. *R. Pye Smith.*

*Daniel and the Revelation.* The Book of Daniel bears the same relation to the Old Testament, and especially to the Prophets, as the Revelation of John to the New, and especially to the prophetic sayings of Christ and His apostles. Daniel is the Apocalypse of the Old Testament. Other books of the Old Testament as well speak of the great Messianic future; other books of the New Testament as well speak of the second coming, or Parousia of Christ. But, while the other prophets bring only the particular situation of the people of God at the time into the light of prophecy, and while the apostles give disclosures on special eschatological points, as the wants and necessities of their readers demand them; Daniel and the Revelation of John are not so much called forth by a temporary want, and given for a special end, but they have the more general aim of serving as prophetic lamps to the congregation of God in these times, in which there is no revelation, and in which the Church is given into the hands of the Gentiles (Luke 21 : 24). We thus recognize Daniel as the light which was sent for the comfort of those who were "wise," to lighten the darkness of the half millennium, from the Captivity till Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. And, in like manner, the Apocalypse of John was given to the saints of the new covenant, as a guiding star, to lead them on their pilgrim's journey through the world, from the first coming of Christ, or rather from the destruction of Jerusalem till His second coming, when He shall establish the kingdom of glory. (Cf. Tit. 2 : 11-13; Rev. 1 : 7; 22 : 17, 20.) The last days indeed form also the subject of Daniel's visions (chaps. 2 and 7), and therefore we must necessarily expect an intimate connection between these chapters and the Apocalypse. But, while Daniel writes for Jews, and from the Old Testament standpoint, John, standing on New Testament ground, writes for Gentile Christians, a difference rich in consequences.

Such being the object for which the apocalyptic books were given, it will easily be seen

why there is, strictly speaking, only one Apocalypse in each Testament, though there are many prophets in the Old, and many prophetic disclosures in the New. There are two great periods of revelation, that of the Old and that of the New Testament. And each of these is followed by a period without revelation; that which succeeded the Exile, and that which succeeded the apostles (the Church historical period). The apocalyptic books are the two lights which shine out of the former periods into the latter. And hence each Apocalypse is among the latest works of its respective canon; it is written at a time when revelation, about to lapse into silence, gathers once more its whole strength into a final effort. We are taught this by the very name apocalyptic. It is an apocalypse (Rev. 1:1), a revelation in a peculiar emphatic sense, needed for the times without revelation; a guiding star in the times of the Gentiles. *Auberten.*

During the last hundred years there have been numerous efforts to find European history anticipated in Daniel—to trace out in his prophecies the latest moves on the chessboard of European politics—the career of Napoleon the Great or of Napoleon the less; of the Turk or Pacha; or of the Emperor of all the Russias. No author was ever stretched or cut to a procrustean bed with more recklessness than this same sensible and excellent Daniel. The sad record of his experiences at the hands of expositors of prophecy should admonish us to approach his writings with a docile spirit, to ask *him* what he meant to say, and not to bring to him a set of ideas and then torture him and his words till they can be made to indorse them. II. C.

*Two Classes of Prophecy: 1. Chapters II. and VII. 2. Chapters VIII.-XI. Difference in their Scope.*

The visions of the first seven chapters, notably those of the second and seventh chapters, take in the entire course of human history to the end of time. The visions recorded in the eighth and following chapters are narrower in scope, and have a definite boundary in time. They deal with the fortunes of the Jew under the Greek and Syrian dominion, and close with the advent and the death of the Messiah. This cleavage in the prophetic subject-matter is indicated in the change of language. From the eighth chapter on to the close the book is written in Hebrew—the sacred speech of the Jew; but from the fourth verse of the second chap-

ter to the end of the seventh chapter the language is the Eastern Aramaic or Chaldee, the language which the exiled Jews used on the street and in the market, and which Nebuchadnezzar spoke and understood. Or, to phrase it differently, the first part of Daniel is written in the speech of the world, because the world is the subject of vision and interpretation; the second part of Daniel is written in the language of the Church, because vision and interpretation deal with the fortunes of Israel, whose mission ends with the advent of Christ.

This distinction between the two classes of prophecy in Daniel is of importance to a proper understanding of them. Some interpreters, beginning with the earlier visions—Nebuchadnezzar's great image and Daniel's four beasts—and noting their world-wide scope, have tried to discover a similar scope in the eleventh and twelfth chapters, to their own and their readers' bewilderment. Others, beginning with these last chapters, and pointing out clearly that they deal with the Syrian rule over Palestine, and go down no farther than the advent and death of the Messiah, have carried this over to the earlier visions, insisting that the two classes are practically repetitions. The way out of this tangle is to treat the two classes separately, the very difference in the language hinting as much. If this fact had been clearly noted, no one would ever have identified the "little horn" of the seventh chapter with the "little horn" of the eighth chapter. In the seventh chapter the "little horn" makes its appearance among the horns of the fourth and the last beast, which can only be the Roman empire; while the "little horn" of the eighth chapter is a horn which grew up among the four horns which took the place of the "notable horn" on the head of the he-goat, by whom the two-horned ram was destroyed. There are four beasts in the seventh chapter; there are only two beasts in the eighth; and the interpretation which follows leaves no doubt that the two-horned ram is the Media-Persian empire, while the he-goat with the notable horn is the Macedonian-Greek rule, which, under Alexander the Great, trampled out the life of the Persian authority. Upon his death, the new kingdom was divided into four parts; and among the Syrian rulers was one whom the Jews remembered with special detestation, as the desecrator of their sanctuary—Antiochus Epiphanes. He is the "little horn" of the eighth chapter. So plain is all this, that the rationalistic critics, who deny all predictive prophecy, insist that the latter half of Daniel must be a

pseudograph, written in his name, but not by him, and invented only when the events had already taken place.

But the "little horn" of the seventh chapter is not associated with the Greek empire. These are four beasts—a lion with eagle's wings; a bear, heavy and voracious; a leopard, swift, with four wings and four heads; and a fourth beast, great and terrible, with iron teeth and hoofs, and with ten horns, among which a "little horn" appears. The traditional interpretation is still the best. The lion with eagle's wings is the Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar. The bear, heavy and voracious, is the Medo-Persian empire of Cyrus. The leopard, swift, with four wings and four heads, is the empire of Alexander, broken at his death into four parts. So far as there is any parallelism, the leopard of the seventh chapter is the he-goat of the eighth. But the vision of the seventh chapter goes beyond the Greek empire. The fourth beast, with iron teeth and hoofs, is the Roman empire. It is broken into ten parts, and then the "little horn" appears, which is described as diverse from the other horns—with human eyes, and a mouth speaking blasphemies, making war upon the saints, claiming to be God, and attempting to introduce a universal religious revolution. We know that the Roman empire was broken into numerous parts, there being even now ten great powers which occupy the old Roman ground—England, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Austria, Italy, Spain and France. Among these ten powers we must look for the "little horn," which subdues three of them, which is not in the line of natural succession, but which grows up by the side of the remaining seven, and is noted for its blasphemy. We should expect to find it already existing, even though it have not already attained its full power, and were still awaiting its deserved doom.

The choice, it seems to me, lies between two interpretations. There are those who think that the "little horn" represents the rise of modern anarchy, which is of European birth, and which permeates most widely the three nations of Russia, Germany and France. The discontent is deep and bitter. And the anarchy which in these lands makes war upon the State also makes war upon industry, upon the family and upon the Church. It is not only atheistic, it is diabolical and immoral. It would change times and seasons. It insists that the whole modern order must go, that all existing institutions are tyrannical, and that Christian-

ity is the most oppressive of them all. These things are boldly preached and widely circulated in print. Insane as these vapors may be, they must be made account of; and there can be no question that on both sides of the Atlantic the problem is up whether we can preserve our Christian civilization—not this part of it or that, but the whole edifice from foundation to roof. The resemblance between all this and the "little horn" of our chapter is certainly striking and startling; and I do not wonder that many regard it as almost a demonstration. Of course, upon this theory the "little horn" is only growing at present; its advent to power and its judgment are yet to come.

There is, however, another view which in some respects is even more striking. This makes the papacy the "little horn." I say the papacy, not the Roman Catholic Church; for the Roman Catholic Church existed centuries before there was any papacy. The papacy is an excrescence, and the destruction of the papacy would not be the destruction of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church can be reformed; the papacy cannot be. The end of the Pope's temporal power did not weaken the Catholic Church; the end of the Pope's spiritual power would not destroy the Church. The Roman Catholic Church existed during the period of the Roman empire; but the papacy belongs to the period of political disintegration, when Europe was beginning to crystallize into its modern States. Among the ten horns this "little horn" appeared, and different from them all, with different aims and different methods. It has plucked up three horns by the roots—Italy, Austria and Spain—subjugating them completely, while the other States have defied its authority. Has it not spoken blasphemous things? Does it not presume to sit upon the throne of God? Has it not changed times and seasons, substituting its own enactments for the simple religion of the New Testament? Is not its path lighted with martyr fires? Are not its hands red with blood? Nothing can wipe out the stains of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day and of the butcheries of the Duke of Alva, hailed with acclamations in the Vatican. It is the papacy which is responsible for all this—that system of ecclesiastical usurpation which chained the Bible, which repressed free thought, which smote with its iron rod all who challenged its claims. Whereunto shall it grow? Some think the grapple is yet to come. Others think that Luther's hammer struck the "little horn," and that we are only witnessing

its dying agonies. The temporal power is gone. The spiritual power is waning. The people are thinking for themselves. I greatly mistake the temper of the whole wide world if the days of the papacy are not numbered. That will be the redemption of the old Roman Catholic Church, which is still the home of many devout and earnest souls.

The vision assures us that the victory will be on the side of truth, and order, and freedom, and home, and God. Thrones will be set, judgment will be pronounced and the scarlet banner of our Immanuel will float over the nations. For that, after all, is the lesson designed to be

taught by all these strange and perplexing visions, whether in Daniel or in the Apocalypse. Here is the philosophy of prophecy. Its aim is not to satisfy our curiosity, but to inspire us with courage and faith. The end is righteousness and peace. There have been trying times—years when the bottomless pit seemed to yawn at men's feet. But the world has not fallen. And the world will not fall. The pierced hands are holding it. It shall swing out of battle into peace, out of tempest into sunshine, out of night into day. And then shall come the ages of everlasting beauty and of the undying song! *Behreuds.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTER I.

**I : 1** IN the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar 2 king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God ; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god ; and he brought the vessels into the treasure 3 house of his god. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in *certain* of the children of Israel, even of the seed royal and of the nobles ; 4 youths in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's 5 palace ; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be nourished three years ; that at the end thereof they might 6 stand before the king. Now among these were, of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, 7 Mishael, and Azariah. And the prince of the eunuchs gave names unto them : unto Daniel he gave *the name of* Belteshazzar ; and to Hananiah, *of* Shadrach ; and to Mishael, *of* Me- 8 shach ; and to Azariah, *of* Abed-nego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank : therefore he request- 9 ed of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God made Daniel to 10 find favour and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink : for why should he see your faces worse liking than the youths which are of 11 your own age ? so should ye endanger my head with the king. Then said Daniel to the steward, whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, 12 and Azariah : Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days ; and let them give us pulse to 13 eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's meat ; and as thou seest, deal with thy ser- 14 vants. So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all 15 the youths which did eat of the king's meat. So the steward took away their meat, and the 16 wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse. Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom ; and Daniel had understanding 17 in all visions and dreams. And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for 18 bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them : and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, 19 Mishael, and Azariah : therefore stood they before the king. And in every matter of wis-

dom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten 21 times better than all the magicians and enchanterers that were in all his realm. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

DANIEL was taken to Babylon in the first deportation in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, seven years, consequently, before the captivity of Jehoiachin, with whom Ezekiel was carried away (Ezek. 1 : 1, 2). Nebuchadnezzar had entered upon the expedition the preceding year (Dan. 1 : 1), when his father was still living, but hastened back after Jerusalem was taken, in consequence of the intelligence of his father's death, that he might make sure of his own accession to the throne. The two prophets of the Captivity, Ezekiel and Daniel, were called to the exercise of entirely distinct functions. Ezekiel dwelt with the captives at the river Chebar, among whom he labored for their spiritual good, delivering to them such messages as from time to time he received. Daniel was taken directly to the city of Babylon itself, to be in the king's palace (Dan. 1 : 3, 4), where he rose to a high official position in the administration of the affairs of the empire (2 : 48, 49). While Ezekiel's task was that of exerting a religious influence upon the exiles themselves, and thus furthering the ends of this severe discipline to which they were subjected, Daniel had his station at the court of the king, where he was to exert an influence on their behalf, protecting them from injurious treatment, and perhaps in due time preparing the way for their return.

Ezekiel was of priestly (Ezek. 1 : 3), Daniel of royal descent (Dan. 1 : 3); and this fact had its influence upon their respective prophecies. While Ezekiel deals largely in the symbols of the sanctuary, and sees in his visions the cherubim (Ezek. 10), the temple, and the ritual (Ezek. 40-48), the future of the people of God being presented to him under the emblem of the re-erection of the earthly sanctuary with greatly enlarged dimensions, and the restoration of the ceremonial service, the same thing is foreshown to Daniel as the establishment of a universal kingdom which is to supersede and outlast every earthly kingdom. W. H. G.

**Chap. I.** This chapter introduces Daniel; gives his early personal history and that of his three young friends. They refuse the delicacies of the king's table, and at their own request are proved on purely vegetable food—successfully (verses 8-16). They appear before the Chaldean king, and are approved (verses 17-21).

**2.** Daniel is careful to say (with historical

accuracy) that at this time the king of Babylon took away only a part of the vessels of the temple. Many more were taken during the short reign of Jeconiah (see 2 K. 24 : 13) and yet some were left behind then, to be taken at the final destruction of the city in the reign of Zedekiah. Of the latter, special mention is made by Jeremiah (chap. 27 : 19-22). This matter of the sacred vessels of the temple was to the Jews of the utmost moment. This heathen king carried these sacred vessels into the house of his god as trophies of victory gained by the favor of his idol over the God of Israel. It was common for heathen kings to honor their own gods in this way. H. C.

**4.** From Herodotus and Strabo it is evident that there existed in Babylon, as in Egypt and (later on) in Persia, an hereditary order of "priests" named Chaldeans, masters of all the science and literature as well as of the religious ceremonies current among the people, and devoted from very early times to that habit of astronomical observation which their brilliant sky so much favored. This priest class was not, strictly speaking, a caste. It was rather a sacerdotal and a learned society into which foreigners and natives, as well as the sons of the priest members, were admitted. In the hands of these men the education of the young was deposited; and instruction in their "learning and tongue"—their written documents and scientific language—was a final and necessary part of the education of those whose physical beauty had already secured them commendation. B. C.

Daniel was to be instructed in the language and learning of the Chaldeans. Babylon was a university city, and among the fragments which have been unearthed there, as also at Nineveh, are fragments of text-books, linguistic and scientific. To learn to read and write inscriptions in the Babylonian language, and in the Accadian Sumerian, the language of the ancient literature of Babylon, was the beginning. Then there was the literature itself to be mastered, little fragments of which have come down to us. But the head and front of Babylonian wisdom was astrology (Dan. 1 : 20); and the largest book, or series of tablets, of which we have knowledge (from the library of Sardanapalus), is a work on astronomy or astrology in seventy volumes. He who acquired the learning of the Chaldeans must have been



taught what days of the month were lucky and unlucky for each several enterprise. He must have studied the hidden meanings of eclipses and comets. He must have been trained in that curious pseudo-scientific system by which the astrologers, recording in comparison terrestrial events and celestial configurations and phenomena, sought to ascertain what would happen on earth at some future time by computing the condition of the heavens for that period. And he who was a pupil of the wise men of Babylon must have learned the wisdom of the *magi* with reference to the stars and star spirits, which are inextricably bound up with the life and fate of the nations and men to whom they belong (Dan. 10: 13, 21; 12: 1). Thousands of inscribed clay tablets from Babylon and neighboring cities enable us also to enter into the domestic and financial life of Daniel's time with singular minuteness. We are learning the price of almost every article of common use from deeds of sale and contracts inscribed on these little clay tablets, and deposited for safe keeping with the banking house of Egibi, and placed in their safety deposit vaults, which were great earthenware jars (Jer. 32: 14). We have court records, marriage settlements, wills, and the like, preserved to us in the same manner. *J. P. Peters.*

6. As far as we can calculate Daniel was about fourteen or fifteen years old when his education began. From the second chapter we learn that this training began immediately after he had been made a captive, and, as the Jewish monarchy had eighteen years of slow wasting and decay to pass through between that third year of Jehoiakim and the fall of Zedekiah, its last weak king, Daniel must have reached the prime of manhood, and have held a position of great power and influence at Nebuchadnezzar's court long before Jerusalem perished in the flames. The exiled Ezekiel, in coupling his name with those of Noah and Job (Ezek. 14: 14), leads us to the conviction that his reputation for goodness and wisdom was spread throughout the whole region wherein the captive Israelites dwelt. It was a merciful provision for them that at the conqueror's court there should be one who could do so much to soften the bitterness of their condition, and whose example would strengthen them so greatly in holding firmly to the faith. *R. P. S.*

7. These names are compounded with the names of the true God; *El* being wrought into Daniel (meaning judge for God) and into Mishael (who is what God is?), while the last syllable of Jehovah appears in Hananiah (whom Jeho-

vah has graciously given) and Azariah (one helped of God). The new names expunge all recognition of the true God, and honor the Chaldean gods instead; Daniel having *Bel* wrought into his, Belteshazzar, which means *a prince of Bel*. II. C.

8-10. *Daniel's first request of the head of the royal household, and the prince's reply.* The remarkable character and gifts of Daniel appear here at the outset of his history. His personal purity and integrity and his wonderful wisdom were manifest at the commencement of his training in the palace. He was then not more than seventeen years of age. The first, and not an inconsiderable proof of his wisdom appears in the form and substance of this request. Not only did he use persuasion, but he proposed a wise and practicable test in reference to the matter of his food. His strong character is expressed by his *purpose of heart* not to partake of the king's meat or wine because it would defile him. Doubtless that purpose would have been strong enough to have borne him through any crisis of trial had it come then, as it proved afterward on a memorable occasion. Either the articles of food or the method of their preparation may have been interdicted by the law of Moses; or the meats and wines may have passed through some connections of idolatrous worship, which would have rendered them unfit for use. The request of Daniel clearly implies that some ceremonial uncleanness pertained to the food placed before them, since he asks that he may not *defile himself*.

The statement of the ninth verse is equally touching and instructive. What it was that gave Daniel favor with the royal chamberlain we are not informed; but only that God had brought the favor and love to his young servant. The principle is stated by Solomon in Prov. 16: 7. The fact of the prince's affection toward Daniel appears in the gentleness of his answer. His lord had appointed their meat and drink; and the chamberlain believed rich living to be essential to well-being and good appearance. To yield to Daniel's request would for both reasons, therefore, endanger his own life. The highest physical and mental development of these young men was the king's sole aim. If this was hindered in any way, especially by disregard of the king's will, then, as was the fashion among Oriental monarchs, the head of the disobeying servant would be unceremoniously stricken off. And old as is the custom which we find here, it has continued to the present day. *B.*

8. He evinces both his conscientiousness in

reference to the law of his God, and his noble self-control in the matter of appetite. He held his appetite in firm subjection to the dictates of enlightened judgment and experience as to what was best for his health and physical vigor. These are among the first and most vital elements in the formation of a character of the highest promise for efficiency and usefulness. II. C.

With respect to the Book of Daniel, the attempt to show that it is opposed to the older prophetic books by its commendation of a legal externalism is utterly vain. Daniel abstains from partaking of the dainties of the royal table because he considers them defiling—not exactly in the sense in which, in the passage Hos. 9:4, the food of the people in captivity is called polluted, but undoubtedly because at the royal repasts it *would be impossible to avoid violations of the Mosaic injunctions concerning different kinds of food, and the eating of flesh sacrificed to idols.* O.

The Old Testament often seems as if it were inspired especially for young men. The chapter before us answers with singular pertinence the inquiry which every young man ought to ask and answer in a manly way: "*What stand shall I take respecting obedience to the drinking usages of society?*"

What were Daniel's temptations to abandon a life of abstinence from strong drink? He was tempted by his youth. He was at the age when appetite is strong, health good, principle weak, and experience not at all. Daniel was tempted also by the usages of his social rank. He was a noble, probably of the blood royal. It was the usage of his order to drink wine, and the best of it, and much of it. Daniel was tempted by the courtesies of official station. He was in training for the first office in the realm. Daniel was tempted also by his absence from home and native land. He was not only in a foreign land, in the Paris of the ancient world, in the court of a king, associating with corrupt young nobles and aristocratic pleasure-seekers, but he was a captive. Put now all these things together—youth, social usage, official rank, professional interests, absence from home and native land, and the mortification of captivity—and where in modern life can you find a case of stronger temptation to a self-indulgent and pleasure-seeking career?

Daniel was true to the *education of his childhood*. His convictions were doubtless the fruit of early training. He is not ashamed of that. He has been educated to do *right*, and of that he is not ashamed. His conduct is clearly in

contrast, and is meant to be, with the customs of the society around him. He put it on the basis of a religious scruple. "He purposed in his heart that he would not *defile himself* with the king's meat and wine." Language cannot well express more truthfully the fundamental principle of the temperance reform. The virtue it inculcates is a religious virtue. It is a religious reform or it is nothing. Its opposite involves moral defilement, to which no young man of lofty and pure spirit will subject himself. Pure manhood in this thing needs to respect itself with much of the delicacy of chaste womanhood. Both revere the sacredness of the human body. They treat it as the temple of God. The great thing which a young man needs in a crisis of temptation is to declare for the right quickly. Leave no time for temptation to accumulate. Then intrust consequences to God. It often requires a great deal of character to do that; not only a religious principle, but a strong character back of that. To be content, in a crisis, with the single thought of *duty*, is one of the grandest things in history. Yet a child can do it. God never disappoints that trust. *Phelps.*

**11-14.** *Daniel's second request of the steward, and the latter's assent to the proposed test.* Melzar means steward, a person employed by the chamberlain in the immediate care of all the youths then in training. To this officer Daniel applies, with the simple proposition for a ten days' trial of a simple diet. He asks that he and his three companions might be fed upon pulse (probably a general term signifying grains of any kind) and water. The result of so short an experiment could have little effect either way, yet enough to serve as an indication of advantage or disadvantage from the diet. So, it would seem with the consent of the chamberlain, he tested the results of the proposed change.

**15, 16.** *Result of the experiment.* Their countenances appeared fairer and fuller than the other young men, and the steward permanently changed the richer for the simpler diet. This regimen was continued during the three years' training; and Daniel and his three companions were then found to be superior to the other young men in respect of physical condition as well as in intellectual abilities. There was nothing miraculous in this result. Nor can a just inference be drawn from it in favor of a regimen of bread (or vegetables) and water. It was the religious and not the sanitary bearing of the matter which Daniel had in mind. Not his dietary wisdom but his will was in it—

his *purpose of heart*, to avoid defilement. The physical conditions of life are of great importance, and the obligation to regard them lies clearly enough upon the New Testament pages ; but they are only suggested indirectly here. B.

In that brief trial of his youth he laid the foundation of a robust, vigorous manhood. He laid then the train which led to a long and splendid career of courtly usefulness. The mysterious power which subsequently closed the mouths of lions for his safety began at this time to gather around his person. In this early and brief fragment of his life he settled the future of his professional career as a prophet of the living God. Those ten short days secured to him a place in the world's history, in which he is destined to live in the grateful and reverent affections of mankind forever. The Chaldean monarch and his haughty court live to-day in the world's memory only because this young Hebrew seer has condescended to speak of them. As one of the authors of the Word of God, and one of the great actors in the history of God's Church, he is to live while time lasts. The foundation of this magnificent destiny, extending into two worlds, was built far back in those few days—not longer than a boy's holidays—in which the character of the young man was proved and his principles tried as a friend of temperance and the child of conscience. *Phelps*.

**17. God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.** By this means, still more than by the patronage of Ashpenaz, they were enabled to command the respect of their fellow-students ; and when the time of trial came, envy was crushed and dejection silenced by the signal and glorious success of these four youths, who had trusted in God ; for then, "in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." There seems to us something full of overlooked instruction in this. We count it reasonable to look to the Lord for our daily bread ; to apply to Him for aid and guidance in the trials and emergencies of life ; but how few are they who seek for the same aid from Him and feel the same dependence upon him in matters of the intellect—in learning, in study, in thought ! It is very reasonable and becoming—it is very necessary—that when we go forth into the toil and business of the day, or when our affairs present perplexing difficulties, we should cast ourselves upon the Lord's protection and look to Him for counsel and guidance.

But is it, can it be less needful that when we sit down to read, to write, to study, to think, we should lift up our hearts trustingly to Him and cry,

"What in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support" ?

God can and will do this for us ; and it would please Him well to be asked to do it. Let us believe that to pray earnestly is to study well, and let us be sure that He will refuse nothing that we seek, in singleness of heart, only for His service and His glory. How many difficulties that seem insuperable would be smoothed, how many blessed thoughts might be suggested, how many forgotten things brought to mind, how many wearinesses refreshed, if we trusted more to God and less to ourselves, in the exercise of such gifts as He may have committed to us, and in the supply of such as we want ! *Kittó*.

**18-20.** "The end of days" is the expiration of the three years fixed by the king and referred to verse 5. The king "communed with them" for the purpose of sounding their depth and testing their adaptation to his wants. He became abundantly satisfied. Hence they took their position ; they "stood before the king," awaiting orders and ready for his service. This is the usual phrase for servants in attendance upon their superiors. So angels are said to "stand before God." "Ten times better" is a definite phrase in the sense of an indefinite. *H. C.*

**20. The magicians and astrologers.** These words seem to comprehend the persons in general who were distinguished in the several kinds of learning cultivated among the Chaldees. Of the like character were the magi in Egypt and Persia and the other countries of the East, and those "wise men" that came to our Saviour at His birth. *Windle*.

**21. Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus.** And so witnessed the accomplishment of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the seventy years. This being so remarkable a year, the text takes notice that Daniel lived so long ; not but that he lived longer—at least till the third year of Cyrus—as appears from chap. 10 : 1. *W. Louth*.

"Daniel continued" are the simple words ; but what a volume of tried faithfulness is unrolled by them ! Amid all the intrigues, indigenous at all times in dynasties of Oriental despotism, where intrigue, too, rolls round so suddenly on its author's head ; amid all the envy toward a foreign captive in high office as a king's councillor ; amid all the trouble inci-

dental to the insanity of the king or to the murder of two of his successors—in that whole critical period for his people Daniel “continued.” He saw the rise and fall of the first great empire. He lived long enough to see the last gleam of glory die away like light out of the evening sky. But Daniel through all vicissitudes preserved essentially the same self. Empires might come and go, but Daniel remained the same. Himself, in uniform integrity, outliving envy, jealousy, dynasties; surviving in untarnished, uncorrupting greatness the seventy years of the Captivity; he was honored during the forty-three years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign; “doing the king’s business” under the insolent and sensual boy Belshazzar; owned by the conquering Medo-Persians; the stay, doubtless, and human protector of his people during those long years of exile; probably commissioned to write the decree of Cyrus which gave leave for that long longed-for restoration of his people, whose re-entrance into their land, like Moses of old, he was not to share. Deeds are more eloquent than words. Such undeviating integrity, beyond the ordinary life of man, in a worshipper of the one God, in the most dissolute and depraved of the merchant cities of old, first minister in the first of the world monarchies, was in itself a great fulfilment of the purpose of God in converting the chastisement of His people into the riches of the Gentiles. *Pusey.*

#### *Suggested Truths.*

A fixed purpose is the foundation of a strong character for good or evil. The earlier the habit of decision is formed, the more efficient is the life.

Gentleness and persuasion ought always to precede command and force in all attempts at human reform, whether with the individual or the community.

God is honored, and men are attracted and influenced for good by the manifestation of firmness in moral or religious principle.

Simple habits and the avoidance of self-indulgence are essential to the formation of a high, unselfish character—only let the sim-

plicity be natural and the self-denial unobtrusive.

To them that ask earnestly, God recompenses trust largely and imparts wisdom liberally. Yet with many, even Christians, the thing most needed is least sought. They ask for blessing upon toil, for the obtaining of daily bread, for aid in emergencies and trials, but seldom do they ask for wisdom in the search after knowledge and the acquisition of learning; seldom do they realize its need in the exercise and the products of thought.

We have “a more sure word of prophecy,” a better and higher knowledge of God and of all spiritual truth, than that obtained in olden time through visions and dreams. For the fullness and clearness of the revealed Scriptures we owe a far deeper and more constant thankfulness than we are wont to cherish. *B.*

It is force of thought which measures intellectual, and so it is the force of principle which measures moral greatness, that highest of human endowments, that brightest manifestation of the Divinity. The greatest man is he who chooses the right with invincible resolution, who resists the sorest temptations from within and without, who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully, and who is calmest in storms and most fearless under menace and frowns, whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, is most unfaltering; and is this a greatness which is apt to make a show, or which is most likely to abound in conspicuous station? The solemn conflicts of reason with passion; the victories of moral and religious principle over urgent and almost irresistible solicitations to self-indulgence; the hardest sacrifices of duty, those of deep-seated affection and of the heart’s fondest hopes; the consolations, hopes, joys, and peace, of disappointed, persecuted, scorned, deserted virtue—these are of course unseen; so that the true greatness of human life is almost wholly out of sight. Perhaps in our presence the most heroic deed on earth is done in some silent spirit, the loftiest purpose cherished, the most glorious sacrifice made, and we do not suspect it. I believe this greatness to be most common among the multitude whose names are never heard. *Anon.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTER II.

2:1 AND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed 2 dreams ; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for 3 to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said 4 unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in the Syrian language, O king, live for ever : tell thy ser- 5 vants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me : if ye make not known unto me the dream and the 6 interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and re- 7 wards and great honour : therefore shew me the dream and the interpretation thereof. They answered the second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew 8 the interpretation. The king answered and said, I know of a certainty that ye would gain 9 time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye make not known unto me the dream, there is but one law for you : for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak 10 before me, till the time be changed : therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, 11 There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter : forasmuch as no king, lord, nor ruler, hath asked such a thing of any magician, or enchanter, or Chaldean. And it 12 is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry 13 and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went forth, and the wise men were to be slain ; and they sought Daniel and his companions 14 to be slain. Then Daniel returned answer with counsel and prudence to Arioch the captain 15 of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon ; he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Wherefore is the decree so urgent from the king ? 16 Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. And Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would appoint him a time, and he would shew the king the interpretation.

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and 18 Azariah, his companions : that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret ; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men 19 of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel 20 blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever 21 and ever : for wisdom and might are his : and he changeth the times and the seasons : he removeth kings, and setteth up kings : he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to 22 them that know understanding : he revealeth the deep and secret things : he knoweth what 23 is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast now made known unto 24 me what we desired of thee : for thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of 25 Babylon : he went and said thus unto him ; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon : bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.

26 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the children of the captivity of Judah, that will make known unto the king 27 the interpretation. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation 28 thereof ? Daniel answered before the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, shew unto the king ; 29 but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and he hath made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head 30 upon thy bed, are these : as for thee, O king, thy thoughts came *into thy mind* upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter ; and he that revealeth secrets hath made known to thee

30 what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but to the intent that the interpretation may be made  
 31 known to the king, and that thou mayest know the thoughts of thy heart. Thou, O king, sawest, and beheld a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness  
 32 was excellent, stood before thee ; and the aspect thereof was terrible. As for this image, his  
 33 head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his  
 34 legs of iron, his feet part of iron, and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and  
 35 brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors ; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them ; and the stone that smote the  
 36 image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream ; and we will  
 37 tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom  
 38 the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory ; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all ; thou art the head  
 39 of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee ; and another third  
 40 kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron : forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things : and as iron  
 41 that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom ; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry  
 42 clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall  
 43 be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men ; but they shall not cleave one to  
 44 another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay. And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people ; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the  
 45 mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass here-  
 46 after ; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should  
 47 offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing  
 48 thou hast been able to reveal this secret. Then the king made Daniel great, and gave him many great gifts, and made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief  
 49 governor over all the wise men of Babylon. And Daniel requested of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon : but Daniel was in the gate of the king.

*The Four Monarchies and the Messianic Kingdom.*

THE chief subject of chaps. 2-7 is the four world monarchies, which, having succeeded each other, finally usher in the kingdom of God. This subject is presented to us in two visions, one of which (chap. 2) opens, the other (chap. 7) closes the first part. The dream of the king and its interpretation (chap. 2) opened up to Daniel a glance into the future of the kingdoms of the world, disclosed to him a whole circle of visions, and thus prepared him for the reception of further and more special revelations ; so that the event possessed for him the character of a preparatory education. God

caused the world power, viewed in its totality, to appear to Nebuchadnezzar under the figure of a colossal human form, whose head of gold represents the Babylonian, whose breast and arms of silver the Medo-Persian, whose body and loins of brass the Græco-Macedonian, whose legs of iron and feet partly iron and partly clay, the Roman empire, with its Germano-Slavonic offshoots. In accordance with the general plan of the prophecy, those kingdoms only are mentioned which stand in some relation to the kingdom of God ; but of these none is left out. "The establishment of the kingdom of God is the aim of His creation, the end of His government of the world. The kingdom of God is the invisible root which sustains

and supports the kingdoms of the world—the invisible power by which the kingdoms of the world are smitten and crushed down. The duration, importance, and dignity of the kingdoms of the world is fixed by their nearer or remoter connection with the kingdom of God. It would be utterly valueless to know beforehand the fate and history of all the kingdoms of the earth, which bear either a very distant or no relation whatever to the kingdom of God. For whatever history they may have, it is insignificant, since it exerts but a slight influence, or none at all, in delaying or advancing the last and final development of things, the crushing of the kingdoms of the world by the kingdom of God" (*Menken*). *Aubertin*.

**Chap. 2.** In this chapter we have an account of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation by Daniel after the Chaldeans had failed to describe and interpret it. The dream itself contains a general outline of the subsequent revelations to Daniel in regard to the world powers. It occurred many years before the other visions. At this time the kingdom of Babylon was approaching to its highest glory. In the later visions of Daniel it was in its last extremity. *Rose*.

Nebuchadnezzar is greatly troubled by a dream which he cannot recall; his Chaldean magi cannot help him to it; but Daniel reveals to the king his dream and its interpretation. Thereupon the king acknowledges the great superiority of the God of Daniel, and promotes him and his three friends to high positions of trust in the State. II. C.

**1.** *And in the second year.* The date would be about the sixth year of Jehoiaikim, in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's sole sovereignty after the death of his father Nabopolassar; about four years after the date in chap. 1: 1, and shortly after chap. 1: 18. B. C.—The second year, according to the Babylonian account, or the fourth, according to the Jewish—that is, in the second year of his reigning alone, or the fourth of his reigning jointly with his father. *Bp. Newton*.—Daniel, writing the following history in Chaldee, for the use of the Chaldeans, follows the computation of time in use among them. *W. Louth*.

*Dreams.* Though it was but one continued dream, it contained a succession of various events. *Windle*.—Dreams are usually the mere fancies of the mind during sleep, and of no account as indicating future events. But the God who made us is able to reach our minds no less while we sleep than while we are awake; and hence can determine our dreams

as truly and perfectly as the succession and character of our waking thoughts. Hence he was wont in ancient times to manifest himself to men in their dreams, as here in the case of this Chaldean king. This dream troubled him and made sleep impossible. It left his mind painfully anxious, as if it foreboded some great calamity; while yet he could not recall the particular points of the dream. Much less could he reach its prophetic significance.

**2.** In this emergency the king called in the aid of those classes of men who professed skill in the occult sciences and in auguries of future events. Most if not all of the unevangelized nations of all history have had such men, often known as a special class under some distinctive name. Here are four different terms of designation. The word rendered "magicians" means sacred scribes—priests of religion. The next term, rendered "astrologers," is several times translated "magoi" (magi) in the Septuagint. The magoi are the "wise men" who came from the East (Matt. 2: 1) to inquire for the new-born Messiah whose star they had seen, and therefore came to worship Him. The second and the third terms imply, in the original Hebrew, the use of occult arts, secret practices, by which their authors pretended to have communication with invisible powers or agencies, and to learn from them what no unaided human mind could attain. The term Chaldean, as used in this connection, denotes a learned class who retained the language and the wisdom of the ancient Kaldi people. II. C.

Their magi, or learned men, were a numerous and important class. The movements of the heavenly bodies, the qualities of metals and minerals, prognostications of the future, explanations of dreams and similar subjects constituted their studies; and as they claimed great skill in the art of foretelling the future, they acquired a position of extraordinary influence. They were the priests of the Chaldean nation, and taught the worship of the sun, moon and planets. In their creed they acknowledged one Supreme Being, the maker and governor of the world; but practically, as in the case of the Egyptians, this sublime truth was lost under the popular notion of many gods. Bel, or Belus, the supreme god of Babylon, was worshipped with extraordinary honors; and a magnificent temple was built for him by Nebuchadnezzar. *W. G. B.*

**4.** The Chaldeans spoke to the king "in Syriac," the usual language of the country. From this point to the end of chap. 7 the author of this book wrote in this dialect, here

called "Syriac," but in the original "Aramaic," and more generally known as the Chaldee.

**5, 6.** The Chaldean wise men steadily demand that the king shall tell his dream. The king has lost it, and hence demands no less persistently that they shall give him both his dream and its interpretation. Feeling intensely anxious to know it, he resorts to the utmost terror of his supreme power of life and death over his subjects, and threatens them the most terrible and disgraceful death if they fail, backing up this penalty by the promise of immense rewards if they are successful. It is plain that God is shaping this matter to test the intrinsic futility of their pretensions to superhuman knowledge, and to bring out in the most public manner his own infinite superiority over them all.

**10, 11.** Forced upon impossibilities as the sole condition of life, the Chaldeans are emboldened to speak out plainly even before this absolute and terribly stern monarch. They assure him that the thing he demands is beyond all human skill, and that no reasonable king ever before made such demands as this upon men of their profession. This admission was of the utmost importance in its bearing upon Daniel and Daniel's God. It shows, moreover, that they had a distinct conception of a higher intelligence, some great mind or minds possessed of knowledge and forecast far beyond that of men.

**13.** Daniel and his three associates ("fellows") seem not to have been present among the magicians, astrologers, etc., who were summoned before the king, and hence knew nothing of this transaction. But now that death is the doom of all the wise men, they are less disposed to count out Daniel and his three friends. All this, whether well or ill intended on their part, was of the Lord, who is wont to make the wrath of man work out His own praise. H. C.

**11-16.** Another proof is here supplied of Daniel's "counsel and wisdom." He first inquires of Arioch into the facts of the case, and then, by his judicious remonstrances, induces that officer to suspend the execution of the king's decree till he had obtained an interview with Nebuchadnezzar. When we compare the request that "the king would give him time" with the royal language to the assembled magicians, "I know of certainty that ye would gain the time," we perceive not only an evidence of the estimation in which Daniel continued to be held at court—for it appears that his wish was immediately granted—but a

demonstration in the continued and effective superintendence of Divine Providence, that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He will." *F. A. C.*

**17, 18.** *Concerning this secret.* "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (De. 29: 29). And to Him Daniel applies in the moment of trial. He anticipates as it were the gracious promise of our Saviour to united prayer (Matt. 18: 19), by calling on his companions to join him. Nor was the answer long delayed. *Rose.*

Daniel not only evinced his desire, by the invitation given to his companions, that they should participate in the credit and the safety he expected, but showed a profound sense of the necessity of united, as well as importunate prayer. He requested them all to solicit "mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret." *F. A. C.*

The last part of verse 18 contains a touch of great beauty. It is thoroughly like the character of Daniel that in his prayer he should make no distinction between believer and unbeliever, between himself and the proud Chaldean priests. The same clause indirectly asserts the position assigned to "Daniel and his fellows." B. C.

**19-23.** The revelation was made to Daniel forthwith, in the manner of a vision by night. He is at once conscious that God has given him the secret prayed for and so much desired, and hence he *breaks out in grateful praise* for this blessing. The expressions "wisdom and might are His," "He changeth the times and the seasons;" "He removeth kings and setteth up kings," are evidently suggested by the subject-matter of the king's dream, which is now both revealed and expounded to Daniel. The central idea of that dream is (as we shall see) the changing course of empire and the Divine agency in casting down one great world-ruling dynasty and setting up another in its stead. In most sublime strains Daniel celebrates also the omniscience and foreknowledge of Jehovah: "He revealeth the deep and secret things," such as no mortal eye can reach; "He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him." Dwelling Himself in light unapproachable and full of glory, nothing present, past or future can be dark to His all searching eye. H. C.

It was from the prophecy recorded in this chapter that the distinction first arose of the four great empires of the world, which hath been followed by most historians and chronologists in their distribution of times. These four



empires, as they are the subject of this prophecy, are likewise the subject of the most celebrated pens both in former and in later ages. Not but there have been empires as great or greater than some of these—as those of the Tartars, for instance, and of the Saracens, and of the Turks—and we may think perhaps that they were as well deserving of a place in this succession of kingdoms, and were equally worthy to be made the objects of prophecy, being as eminent for the wisdom of their constitutions, the extent of their dominion and the length of their duration. But these four empires had a particular relation to the Church and people of God, who were subject to them in their turns. They were therefore particularly predicted; and we have in them, without the intermixture of others, a line of prophecy extending from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the full and complete establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah. He who is Arbitrer of kingdoms and Governor of the universe can reveal as much of their future revolutions as He pleaseth; and He hath revealed enough to manifest His providence and to confirm the truth of religion. What Daniel said upon the first discovery of these things well may we say, after the completion of so many particulars, “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are His; and He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings, and setteth up kings; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledgeth to them that know understanding; He revealeth the deep and secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him” (verses 20–22). *Bp. Newton.*

28. Introduced into the king’s presence in the early morning, after declaring that the king’s secret could only be revealed by the God in heaven, in the name of that God, Daniel recites the dream. After completing the narration, he affirms its truth with absolute assurance. Then, without even waiting for the king’s acknowledgment of its correctness, Daniel proceeds with the same assurance to declare its interpretation. B.

*But there is a God in heaven.* Daniel’s great modesty in disclaiming all merit or extraordinary wisdom on his own part; his piety in giving the glory to God alone and at the same time his skill and dexterity in preparing the king’s attention, and gradually opening his understanding to the reception of the truth and the acknowledgment of the one true God, are very remarkable. *Wintle.*—The king, as Jerome justly observes, had a prophetic dream

that, the saint interpreting it, God might be glorified, and the captives and those who served God in captivity might receive great consolation. We read the same thing of Pharaoh. *Bp. Newton.*—This marvellous narrative must have as its basis essential truth. It could not have been an invention. It would not have served its purpose, nor were there men who could invent it at the time supposed. It fits into the historical crisis in which the Bible puts it. It was to the king a true revelation of the counsels of God. *Gilbert.*

31–45. This passage is in two parts—the dream (verses 31–35) and its interpretation (verses 37–45). The dream is symbolic—one connected, compact series of symbols; the interpretation renders these symbols into literal language. The symbols scarcely need any comment. The language itself is plain. Here is one huge image of the human form, the head of gold being the first part; the breast and arms of silver the second; the belly and thighs of brass the third; the legs, feet and toes, part iron and part clay, the fourth. Then a stone cut from the mountain without hands smites the image upon its feet, but breaks in pieces the whole image and scatters it to the winds of heaven; and then itself becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. A stone is a proper symbol of an agency that comes to break a huge metal image. That it is “cut from the mountain without hands” indicates that the Messiah was born and brought forth before the world as King of nations by Divine rather than human agencies; while His smiting the great image to its destruction denotes the power of God in His providential government, overturning guilty nations. The interpretation shows that the central idea of the dream is *the course of empire*; the rapid succession of great world monarchies. Of these the first four are of the earth, earthly—mere human kingdoms. The fifth is in some respects peculiar, being “set up by the God of heaven.” The points affirmed here of this fifth kingdom are that it first destroys and then supersedes all the other kingdoms; that it shall not pass over into the hands of other races and people, as those that preceded it had done; that it shall not be transient, like them, but enduring; and finally it shall be in a higher sense than they, universal in extent, filling all the earth. Both Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles, by taking up these words of Daniel and applying them to the reign of Christ, become themselves so far forth the interpreters of Daniel’s prophecy, certifying to us that in their view the Spirit who spake

by Daniel meant by this fifth kingdom that of the Gospel age whose king was Jesus the Messiah. Let it be borne in mind that of these five kingdoms, four are in point of origin earthly ; the fifth heavenly ; four are of this world ; the fifth is " not of this world ; " four are of the sort well known to profane history ; the fifth is of the sort little known except in sacred history—a kingdom whose defined purpose is " righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Though eminently spiritual, it yet none the less controls the external life—unto universal righteousness. II. C.

**31.** *Thou, O king, saiest, and behold a great image.* It represents a body of four great nations, which should reign over the earth successively—viz., the people of Babylonia, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. And by a stone cut out without hands, which fell upon the feet of the image, and brake all the four metals to pieces, and " became a great mountain and filled the whole earth," it further represents that a new kingdom should arise after the four and conquer all those nations, and grow very great and last to the end of all ages. *Sir Isaac Newton.*—A great, terrible human figure is not an improper emblem of human power and dominion ; and the various metals of which it was composed not unfitly typify the various kingdoms that should arise. The order of their succession is clearly denoted by the order of the parts, the head and higher parts signifying the earlier times, and the lower parts the latter times. *Bps. Chandler and Newton.*—Grotius acutely observes that this image appeared with a glorious lustre in the imagination of Nebuchadnezzar, whose mind was wholly taken up with admiration of worldly pomp and splendor ; whereas the same monarchies were represented to Daniel under the shape of fierce and wild beasts (chap. 7), as being the great supporters of idolatry and tyranny in the world. *W. Louth.*

**32.** *This image's head was of fine gold,* which Daniel interprets (verse 38), " Thou art this head of gold ; " thou, and thy family, and thy representatives. The Babylonian therefore was the first of these kingdoms ; and it was fitly represented by the " head of fine gold " on account of its great riches ; and Babylon, for the same reason, was called by Isaiah " the golden city " (chap. 14 : 4). Daniel addresses Nebuchadnezzar as if he were a very powerful king and his empire very large and extensive : " Thou, O king, art a king of kings." (See verses 37 and 38.)

*His breast and his arms of silver.* Which

Daniel interprets (verse 39), " And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." The kingdom which arose after the Babylonian was the Medo-Persian. The two hands and the shoulders, saith Josephus, signify that the empire of the Babylonians should be dissolved by two kings. The two kings were the kings of the Medes and Persians, whose powers were united under Cyrus, who was son of one of the kings and son-in-law of the other ; who besieged and took Babylon, put an end to that empire, and on its ruins erected the Medo-Persian, or Persian, as it is more usually called, the Persians having soon gained the ascendancy over the Medes. This empire, from its first establishment by Cyrus to the death of the last king, Darius Codomannus, lasted not much more than two hundred years.

*His belly and his thighs of brass.* Which Daniel interprets (verse 39), " And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." Alexander the Great subverted the Persian empire. The kingdom therefore which succeeded to the Persian was the Macedonian ; and this kingdom was fitly represented by brass ; for the Greeks were famous for their brazen armor, their usual epithet being, " the brazen coated Greeks." The interpretation of Daniel in Josephus is, that another, coming from the west, completely armed in brass, shall destroy the empire of the Medes and Persians. This third kingdom is also said to " bear rule over all the earth," by a figure usual in almost all authors. Alexander himself commanded that he should be called the king of all the world—not that he really conquered the whole world, but he had considerable dominions in Europe, Asia and Africa—that is, in all the three parts of the world then known ; and Diodorus Siculus and other historians give an account of ambassadors coming from almost all the world to congratulate him upon his success, or to submit to his empire ; and then especially, as Arrian remarks, did Alexander appear to himself and to those about him to be master both of the earth and of the sea. The Seleucidae, who reigned in Syria, and the Lagidae, who reigned in Egypt, successors of Alexander, might be designed particularly by " the two thighs " of brass. And of all his successors they alone might be pointed out, because they alone had much connection with the Jewish Church and nation.

**33.** *His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.* Which is thus interpreted by Daniel : " And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron," (See verses 40–43.) The Ro-

mans succeeded next to the Macedonians, and therefore in course were next to be mentioned. The Roman empire was stronger and larger than any of the preceding. The Romans brake in pieces and subdued all the former kingdoms. The iron was "mixed with miry clay," and the Romans were defiled with a mixture of barbarous nations. *Bp. Newton.*

40. *And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron. While there was a diminution of splendor from the gold and silver of the Oriental monarchies, there was an increase of strength; as iron is the strongest of the metals, so the Roman empire which succeeded that of the Greeks was the most powerful of them all. Forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. The Roman empire not only broke down that which preceded it, and extended its dominion more widely than any one of the others had done, but it had a much greater solidity and cohesion than the rest. This explanation has until quite recently been universally accepted. No other view would have been thought of, apparently, but for two reasons. One is the notion that the Book of Daniel is not the production of the prophet bearing that name, but belongs to a much later period—that of the Maccabees—and that the prophecies of this book are either past history dressed in the garb of prophecy, or possibly predictions of ancient date which were rewritten and modified into accordance with the history. Hence it is claimed that the predictions of a specific nature cannot go beyond the time of the Maccabees, and that therefore the Roman empire can find no place there. A second reason is drawn from a comparison of passages in subsequent chapters. The fourth kingdom of this second chapter is doubtless the same as the fourth beast of chap. 7, which had ten horns, among which there came up a little horn (verses 7, 8), which made war with the saints (verse 21), and spoke against the Most High (verse 25). This has been thought to be parallel to the little horn spoken of Daniel 8:9 sqq., which undoubtedly refers to Antiochus Epiphanes and his persecution of the Jews and suppression of the worship of the temple. This little horn sprang up upon the he-goat representing the Greek empire of Alexander and his successors. It is hence inferred that the fourth kingdom of chaps. 2 and 7 must likewise be, not the Roman, but the Greek empire, and that the three preceding kingdoms spoken of in these chapters must be prior to it. Various attempts have accordingly been made*

to make out three empires before that of the Greeks. This can only be done by dividing some one of the empires previously recited into two. Some have proposed to divide the Babylonish empire into two. The first kingdom is expressly declared (verse 38) to be that of Nebuchadnezzar; it has been said that the second kingdom is the Babylonish empire under Belshazzar (chap. 5). This, however, is not (verse 39) "another kingdom," but the very same, with a simple change of the ruling monarch. Again, it has been proposed to divide the Medo-Persian empire into, first, an empire of the Medes under Darius, and then an empire of the Persians under Cyrus and his successors. But the Medes and the Persians are always combined as acting together and united under one government. The change from Darius the Mede to Cyrus the Persian was to a ruler of a different dynasty, but the empire was unchanged; and it is so represented in Dan. 8, where the ram with the two horns (verse 3) is confessedly the Medes-Persian empire, the two horns denoting the Median followed by the Persian rulers. It has still further been proposed to divide the Greek empire into, first, the empire of Alexander, and then the divided empire of his successors. But this is as impracticable as either of the preceding suggestions. The empire of Alexander and his successors was the same, only broken up into parts. The fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's dream can be no other than the Roman empire, which corresponds with the description given in both chap. 2 and chap. 7 in every particular. W. H. G.

The singular amalgam of iron and clay in the fourth kingdom is worth notice. No sculptor or metallurgist could make a strong unity out of such materials, of which the combination could only be apparent and superficial. The fact to which it points is the artificial unity, into which the great conquering empires of old crushed their unfortunate, subject peoples, who were hammered, not fused, together. "They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men" (verse 43) may either refer to the attempts to bring about unity by marriages among different races, or to other vain efforts to the same end. To obliterate nationalities has always been the conquering despots' effort, from Nebuchadnezzar to the Czar of Russia, and it always fails. This is the weakness of these huge empires of antiquity, which have no internal cohesion, and tumble to pieces as soon as some external bond is loosened. There is only one kingdom which has no disintegrating forces lodged in it, because it unites men individually

to its king, and so binds them to one another; and that is the kingdom which Nebuchadnezzar saw in its destructive aspect. A. M.

There is a clear and unambiguous statement of the rise of four kingdoms; the four not to be contemporaneous, but successive; not originating from the same power, but diverse one from the other; not confined to the sway of a domestic sceptre, but kingdoms of conquest and power, bearing rule over the subject nations. An extension of dominion is predicated of the third, an exceeding strength of the fourth. In a word, there is here a conspicuous and connected prophecy of the most comprehensive changes and revolutions wrought on the face of the ancient world.

It is generally and rightly admitted that the same four powers or kingdoms are described in the second and seventh chapters. The fourfold partition of the respective symbols, the various minutiae of analogy and agreement, indicate a coincidence which leads to a certainty through the literal interpretation annexed to and completing the revelation of those visions. Of itself the duplication is not unimportant; it adds to the steadiness of the prediction. Differences of imagery have been rightly attributed to a difference of character in the revelation; in chap. 2 the powers are taken from the sphere of the inanimate, and represent the purely external and unconscious side of the subject; in chap. 7 they are chosen from the sphere of the animate, and illustrate typically the living conscious element of the prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar saw things only from without. The powers of the world in their fullest glory were to him but component parts of one splendid colossal figure bearing the outward appearance of a man; they rested upon but one and the same geographical base—the eastern world: the power of God's kingdom in its highest splendor was but humble as a "stone cut without hands." Daniel penetrated deeper into the vision. He saw that the kingdoms of the world were, notwithstanding their defiant attitude, of a nature animal, plastic, and lower than human. Pagan minds were exhibited to him dull and ignorant of God, as the image, however costly, is ignorant of its maker. Only in the kingdom of God, that humble corner-stone "coming not with observation," was embosomed all that was powerful and eternal. Accordingly to the prophet the kingdom of God is, from the very outset, superior to the kingdoms of the world. Gold, silver, brass, iron—the puppet-work of man's hands is ground to

powder by the stone, the work cut without hands. B. C.

According to the modern view, "the empires can be no other than those of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians and Greeks, who all placed the centre of their power in Babylon, and appeared to have exhibited on one stage the great types of national life. The Roman power was at its height when Christ came, but the Egyptian kingdom, the last relic of the empire of Alexander, had just been destroyed, and thus the 'stone cut without hands struck the feet of the image,' and Christianity forever destroyed the real supremacy of heathen dominion." The strangest part in the passage quoted above is the assertion that the stone cut without hands struck the image on its feet, in close connection with a statement that the last relic of the Greek empire had passed away before the coming of Christ. In fact, from beginning to end this interpretation appears to be only an adaptation of the prophecy to the interpretation, instead of adapting the interpretation to the prophecy. The very circumstance, which appears to indicate that the fourth empire must be in existence at the coming of Christ—*i.e.*, that the stone smites the image on the feet, is thus thrust aside to make the prophecy answer the exigencies of a theory.

The ancient interpretation therefore appears to have at least the merit of being deduced from the conditions of the prophecy and the course of the world's history. And certainly, the analogy suggested by Professor Westcott between the empires of ancient and modern history is very little calculated to recommend his interpretation. The fact seems rather to be, that since the destruction of the Roman empire no power has appeared, except for a few years at some particular epochs, which could be said to occupy the place in modern history which those empires did in the ancient world. *Ross.*

**45.** Of the stone cut without hands, three things are specified—its origin, its duration, and its destructive energy. The origin is heavenly, in sharp contrast to the human origin of the kingdoms symbolized in the colossal man. That idea is twice expressed: once in plain words, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom;" and once figuratively, as being cut out of the mountain without hands. By the mountain we are probably to understand Zion, from which, according to many a prophecy, the Messiah King was to rule the earth (Ps. 2; Isa. 2:3). The fulfilment of this prediction is found not only in the supernatural birth of

Jesus Christ, but in the spread of the Gospel without any of the weapons and aids of human power. Twelve poor men spoke, and the world was shaken and the kingdoms remoulded. The seer had learned the omnipotence of ideas and the weakness of outward force. A thought from God is stronger than all armies, and out-conquers conquerors. By the mystery of Christ's incarnation, by the power of weakness in the preachers of the cross, by the energies of the transforming Spirit, the God of heaven has set up the kingdom. It "shall never be destroyed." Its Divine origin guarantees its perpetual duration. The kingdoms of man's founding, whether they be in the realm of thought or of outward dominion, "have their day, and cease to be," but the kingdom of Christ lasts as long as the eternal life of its King. He cannot die any more, and He cannot live disrowned. Other forms of human association perish, as new conditions come into play which antiquate them; but the kingdom of Jesus is as flexible as it is firm, and has power to adapt all conditions in which men can live to itself. It will outlast earth, it will fill eternity; for when He "shall have delivered up the kingdom to His Father," the kingdom which the God of heaven set up will still continue. It "shall not be left to other people." By that seems to be meant that this kingdom will not be like those of human origin, in which dominion passes from one race to another, but that Israel shall ever be the happy subjects and the dominant race. We must interpret the words of the spiritual Israel, and remember how to be Christ's subjects is to belong to a nation who are kings and priests.

The destructive power is graphically represented. The stone, detached from the mountain, and apparently self-moved, dashes against the heterogeneous mass of iron and clay on which the colossus insecurely stands, and down it comes with a crash, breaking into a thousand fragments as it falls. "Like the chaff of the summer threshing floors" (Dan. 2:35) is the *débris*, which is whirled out of sight by the wind. Christ and His kingdom have reshaped the world. These ancient, hideous kingdoms of blood and misery are impossible now. Christ and His Gospel shattered the Roman empire, and cast Europe into another mould. They have destructive work to do yet, and as surely as the sun rises daily will do it. The things that can be shaken will be shaken till they fall, and human society will never attain its stable form till it is moulded throughout after the

pattern of the kingdom of Christ. The vision has no reference to the quickening power of the kingdom; but the best way in which it destroys is by transformation. It slays the old and lower forms of society by substituting the purer which flow from possession of the one spirit. That highest glory of the work of Christ is but partially represented here; but there is a hint in Dan. 2:35 which tells that the stone has a strange vitality, and can grow, and does grow, till it becomes an earth-filling mountain. A. M.

It is a growing kingdom. At first it was small, but it had in it an expansive power; it was "a little stone hewn out of a mountain without hands," but it shall become "a great mountain, and fill all the earth." It has grown, and is growing, "and of its increase there shall be no end." "He must increase; He shall reign until all things are put under Him." He goes on "conquering and to conquer;" "the last enemy shall be overcome and be bound to the wheels of His chariot. The Scriptures are much occupied in these things. Prophets thought as much of missions, their labors and their successes as we do; they employed the most glowing language and the sublimest strains in their predictions of the glory of Messiah's kingdom in the latter day; they snatch from earth and heaven, from the sun, the moon and stars, the fairest and the grandest images, to represent the state of the Church at that desired period; they levy a tribute upon universal nature, and make all things contribute to illustrate, as they will in reality contribute to advance, this kingdom. R. Hall.

In striking contrast with the fixed limits and definite proportions of human civilizations is the indefinite size and shape of the kingdom of God. The stone is an appropriate symbol of it, the rough stone taken out of the quarry, not the stone crystallized into the mathematical facets of a gem. The statue, moulded by human arts, shares in the limitations of man's own nature. Made by God, the stone shares in His infinitude. The mystic stone in the vision grew and expanded until it became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The landscape consisted of itself and its shadow. It presents a different aspect from each new point of view. The uniform monotonous despotisms of antiquity were created by man for his own aggrandizement; they had therefore fixed bounds of space and duration beyond which they could not pass. But the kingdom of God is the creation of Divine love and grace, and therefore it unfolds with the need of man, and

develops new capacities of blessing him, and endures forever.

The dream of the night has become the grandest fact of history; the vision of a heathen monarch has become the reality of Christendom; and every age will give the vision and the dream a grander and yet grander interpretation. God has made the stone which the builders rejected the headstone of the corner; and on it is built all that is most precious and enduring in the world—the Church which was bought with the blood of Christ, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. The living stones built upon the Living Stone will partake of the life, durability and value of their foundation. *H. Macmillan.*

In the midst of a great empire, powerful and crafty above all former empires, more extensive and better organized, suddenly a new kingdom arose. Suddenly in every part of this well-cemented empire, as if by some general understanding, yet without any sufficient system of correspondence or centre of influence, ten thousand orderly societies, professing one and the same doctrine, sprang up as from the earth. It seemed as though the fountains of the great deep were broken up and some new forms of creation were thrown forward from below, the manifold ridges of some "great mountain" crossing, splitting, disarranging the existing system of things, levelling the hills, filling up the valleys—irresistible as being sudden, unforeseen and unprovided for—till it "filled the whole earth." . . . If there be a moral governor over the world, is there not something unearthly in all this, something which we are forced to refer to Him from its marvellousness, something which from its dignity and greatness bespeaks His hand? The Gospel dispensation is confessedly a *singular* phenomenon in human affairs, whether we consider the extent it occupies in history, the harmony of its system, the consistency of its design, its contrariety to the existing course of things and success in spite of that contrariety, and lastly the avowed intention of its first preachers to effect those objects which it has really attained. They professed to be founding a kingdom different from any that had been before, as disclaiming force, in this world yet not of this world, while yet it was to be of an aggressive and encroaching character, an empire of conquest and aggrandizement, destroying all former powers, and itself standing forever. And, in matter of fact, it exists to this day with its territory spread over more than the world then known to the Jews. *Newman.*

**46, 47.** Profoundly impressed with the greatness of Daniel and of Daniel's God, and quite too oblivious of Daniel's personal disclaimer ("not for any wisdom that I have more than any living") the king fell prostrate before Him and gave command that an oblation and sweet odors should be offered to Him. This must be ascribed to his heathen ideas. Still it did not preclude from his mind a strong conviction of the supremacy of the God of Daniel. His profession of faith on this point is (for the time) very strong. *H. C.*

**47.** When the king asks Daniel if he is able to make known the dream and its interpretation, he reminds him that there had been no power in the gods the diviners served to enable them to do this; "but *there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.*" And throughout he ascribes everything to this God whom he served—the dream itself, the interpretation, the existence and power of the Babylonian empire in the person of the king before him—and all the historical developments which the vision prefigured. This he succeeded in impressing with such force upon the king's mind as at the close drew from him the memorable declaration, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." *Kitto.*

**48, 49.** Promotion followed, and Daniel is advanced to the position of prime minister for the province of Babylon and head-man over the whole fraternity of magicians, soothsayers, priests of religion and of science. At his request his three friends also are promoted to important trusts. Daniel's place in the gate of the king put him next the royal person as his first counsellor—a position of the very highest trust and influence. Such were the first and immediate results of the Divine favor to Daniel in revealing the secret of the king's dream. *H. C.*

Upon the capture of Babylon, Daniel retained his high office, being made chief of the three presidents of the empire by Darius the Mede, and becoming thus exposed to the envy of the princes, he was by their artifices cast into the den of lions. The reign of Darius seems to have been short, and his scheme for the division of the empire into satrapies (6 : 1) was not carried out by Cyrus, and remained in abeyance until the time of another Darius, the son of Hystaspes. But Cyrus knew the worth of Daniel, and apparently he continued in office all the rest of his days (6 : 28). He never returned to Judea, being on the accession of

Cyrus to the throne too far advanced in years. As he was taken to Babylon a year before Nebuchadnezzar began his reign, and as that monarch reigned forty-three years, and Daniel was still alive in the third year of Cyrus (10 : 1), he must have attained to a ripe old age. R. P. S.

*Noticeable Facts and Truths Suggested by the Chapter and its Connections.*

The grand features of the then future were first disclosed in symbol to a heathen monarch. The probable reasons were : to give prominent place and influence to Daniel and his three companions ; to produce an ulterior effect upon the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, in order to the accomplishment of God's designed results ; more deeply to emphasize and effectually to proclaim the great events of the future.

The highest knowledge and truest wisdom has ever been found, as here, among the studious disciples of the true God. Baseless professions and counterfeits of wisdom, and baneful errors of induction have proceeded from those alien or hostile to Jehovah. This is true now, as in the period of the ancient Chaldean science.

In this prophetic revelation, afterward so clearly fulfilled, read an emphatic commentary upon Isa. 46 : 9, 10.

Human knowledge is attained only through disclosures made by the Divine mind. *Prayer*, by which such disclosures are granted, is therefore both philosophical and necessary. Its results in the case of Daniel and his friends are only exceptional in the *prophetic* character of the disclosure. The promise of wisdom is to all, and the measure promised is that of every one's need. "If any lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally."

In the result of the prayer of the friends, we find an illustration in advance of Christ's work respecting the agreement of two or three in asking anything of God.

God rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. He createth and breaketh down kingdoms. All the course of empire and the particular history of nations and peoples is ordered with reference to the final kingdom, the universal dominion, of Christ. Nations and conquerors, individuals and events work toward the establishment of that dominion. Well, therefore, may we labor, pray, hope for and expect its coming. B.

*Kingdoms that Die, and the Kingdom that Lives.*

To the law of decay in human affairs *there is*

*one grand and marvellous exception.* God has a kingdom in this world, which lives. It deserves mention in illustration of this exception, that *the work of God in redemption is the only thing in human history that dates back to the beginning of time.* God's work in this world is the only thing now living that goes back into antediluvian history. It is the only thing which links the whole of human history together. Other things fall, die, rot by the side of this ; this lives on to the world's end.

The contrast between the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God is further seen in the *mysterious vitality of right in this world, in its conflicts with wrong.* Evil, organized never so deftly, becomes effete. Good seems robust and always growing. The right, in the outset of a great conflict with wrong, is always underneath ; yet it always comes uppermost.

The contrast between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world is further seen in *an anomalous suspension of the law of decay in some cases of historic immortality.* The only men who are destined to live while the world lives are those who are in some way especially identified with the kingdom of Christ. The only nations which will escape the decline and fall which have thus far made up the dismal round of history are those which shall be given to Christ, and shall realize the Christian ideal of national life in the civilization of the future. The perpetuity of the Hebrew nation is the great miracle of history, unparalleled by the fate of any other people on the globe under similar conditions. They live because they were once, and are to be again, the chosen people of God in executing the purposes of redemption. It is the glory of the Christian Church that it is the Church of the living God, in which is concentrated all that is eternal in this world's history. It is identified with God, and God is identified with it. Its work is God's work. Already its history laps over into another world. It has sent forward its advance guard in innumerable hosts who are waiting for the rear guard. But a little stream divides them. That stream itself is populous with the multitudes who are crossing over.

It is a privilege—is it not ?—to be a member of the Church of Christ ; to constitute *one* of this mighty and immortal host ; to bear the name which it bears ; to unite in its songs, and be remembered in its prayers ; to be identified with its work, and to share its rewards ; to be counted worthy of its sufferings, and to earn the fruit of its heroism ; what has life to offer to a good man of lofty aspirations which can

bear comparison with this ? I never think of *He is losing so much which might be his ; he is failing to achieve so much which might swell his reward at the Master's coming !* *Phelps.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTER III.

**3 : 1** NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits : he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up ; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up : and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the peoples, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and brought accusation against the Jews. They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image : and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego ; these men, O king, have not regarded thee : they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said unto them, Is it of purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that ye serve not my god, nor worship the golden image which I have set up ? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, *well* ; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace ; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands ? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have 17 no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace ; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego : *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded certain mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their hosen, their tunics, and their mantles, and their *other* garments, and 22 were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men 23 that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach,



24 and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste : he spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire ? They answered and said  
 25 unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of  
 26 the gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace : he spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth out of the  
 27 midst of the fire. And the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their hosen changed, nor had the smell  
 28 of fire passed on them. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and have yielded their bodies, that they might  
 29 not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dung-  
 30 hill : because there is no other god that is able to deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

It is easy to see that as chaps. 2 and 7 go together, so do chaps. 3 and 6, and 4 and 5. And, indeed, these two middle pairs of chapters (3 and 6, 4 and 5) have a symbolical significance independent of their historical value. The first pair shows us, by the example of Daniel and his three friends, how wonderfully near God is to His saints, especially when, faithfully adhering to their Master, they seem to be crushed by the world-power. The second pair present the two kings of the first monarchy, as an example of how God can suddenly humble the world-power in the very height of its insolence and rebellious scorn, and of how little reason the faithful have to dread its might. *Aubertin.*

**Chap. 3.** The king makes a huge golden image, sets it up, and convenes the officers of every grade in his kingdom to attend its dedication and join in its worship. Daniel's three friends refuse, and are cast into a furnace of fire : God preserves them from all harm, and the king by decree dooms to death all who shall speak against their God. *H. C.*

The noble example of faith and courage recorded in this chapter has been the comfort of the Church in all ages of persecution. Jerome observes that it was a testimony of the truth to the Gentiles, and an opportunity of embracing salvation, that they who first learned the power of one God by the revelation of Daniel might learn from the firmness of the three saintly children to leave off the worship of idols and to despise death. *Rose.*

An interval of sixteen years had elapsed since the events of the previous chapter. As the event here narrated occurred just after the final

captivity of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar had had ample time to forget the impressions made by the dream which had been previously disclosed and interpreted by Daniel. His unbroken series of magnificent triumphs, without one interposed warning, had naturally sealed this forgetfulness of the God of Daniel. His supremacy was universally acknowledged as a world conqueror. It was natural that he should undertake some act of worship to his god, upon a scale corresponding to his own achievements. Thus was furnished the occasion and the motive for the erection of the colossal image upon the plain of Dura, adjacent to the walls of Babylon. Including the pedestal, the image, which was in the form of a man, was ninety feet high and nine feet broad, constructed of wood covered with gold. For the dedication of this image to some particular deity, he issued a decree calling together official representatives from all the peoples included in his vast dominions. Among these came the three friends of Daniel, who was still in charge of the province of Babylon. *B.*

**1-3.** The king could not convene all the people of his vast dominions. The next thing to it was to convene all the officers of every name and grade. These would be the strong and influential men of his realm. Hence this convocation would send its influence for idolatry down through the whole political framework of his kingdom and reach its entire population. The great number of grades of officers indicates a high degree of system and order in the constitution of this government. Of the eight several officers grouped in this summons, the first is the highest grade, a sort of viceroy.

The second is the class of deputies. The third is commonly rendered "governor," and is used repeatedly by Ezra, Nehemiah, and others; indeed, it is identically the pasha. The fourth class are the chief judges; the fifth the royal treasurers; the sixth were persons skilled in the law, and might be either counsellors or judges; the seventh term seems to be essentially the same as the sixth, lawyers; and the last comprehends all other officers in the province. All these were summoned to come to the dedication of the great image.

1. The image was sixty cubits high and six cubits broad—dimensions which must have rendered it visible to the most remote of the worshippers assembled in the great plain at the dedication. This vast size is not without parallel, and has even been exceeded. The Colossus of Rhodes was seventy cubits high, and the Colossus of Nero was not of inferior magnitude, being one hundred and ten feet high. It is observable that the height is out of all proportion to the breadth; and as the rules of proportion were usually observed in such cases, it is probable that the assigned height included that of the pedestal on which the image stood. *Kitto*.

4. *O people, nations, and languages.* Babylon at this time at the height of her glory, commercial and military, contained within her vast area representatives from east and west, north and south, the Greek and the Moab, the Phœnician and the Assyrian, the "captive of Judah," and the Arab of the south. The official proclamation, spoken by the herald, addressed them as "people, nations (better 'tribes'), and languages." It was a form of address which reminded them of the greatness of the monarch who claimed the obedience of Semite and Aryan alike, and it was probably the formula then in use. B. C.

1-7. The signal for simultaneous worship by prostration of the body before the great image was to be given by this grand orchestra, which seems to have combined all sorts of musical instruments known in that age—another case in proof that the controlling spirit in all systems of idolatry seizes on every attraction of art, and not least, upon external beauty and upon music as important auxiliaries of power. The precise character of these various instruments can be reached in this age only proximately. The first was a horn. The third is the word "cithra" in Hebrew letters. The "sackbut" is thought to have been a trombone—an instrument which secures a wide range of tone by being constructed with a slide by

which its length and volume may be changed at pleasure. The word "psaltery" is the same in Hebrew and in Greek. II. C.

There was, however, something more than mere worship included in the command to bow down before this massive golden idol. As in every age, wherein Church and State are combined under one head, the recognition or denial of one implied the recognition or denial of the other; so here, disobedience to Nebuchadnezzar's decree with reference to worship was deemed equivalent to treason against his sovereignty. Moreover, this double test had a special application at this time, when so many captives and foreigners had been gathered in Babylon, as the result of his wide conquests. That the three friends of Daniel should have been enviously watched by the heathen astrologers was natural; as also that these astrologers should tell the king of the disobedience of these three favored Jews to his decree. B.

7. Splendid ceremonies, which attach to those who observe them a certain degree of distinction and glory, may be easily performed; but the internal offering, "the sacrifices of a broken and a contrite spirit," love to God and separation from the world, can only belong to true religion, as they spring from the energy of Divine grace, and are the proofs of that moral victory over human nature which Christianity alone can achieve. No pomp, or sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery are here required. The spirit of genuine religion is free from that which is ostentatious and merely adapted to allure the senses; it neither prevails by parade nor by compulsion; it disclaims what is artificial and noisy; its music is the voice of prayer; its herald the exhibition of a "conduct becoming the Gospel;" its triumph the sanctification of the heart. *F. A. Cox*.

12. Daniel was not present at this dedication of the image, and he was not among the Jews accused. Conjectures have been freely offered to explain his absence, such as, that Daniel stood too high in royal favor to be touched; that he, personally, was too much loved; that he was ill; that he was engaged elsewhere on business; that as "Rab Signin" (2: 48) he was exempted from the prostration demanded of lay officials. These conjectures raise more difficulties than they appease. Yet it may be safely asserted that, had his absence caused any defect in the religious ceremonies, had it been possible to raise against him a charge of dereliction of duty, the "accusers of the Jews" would not have been slow to incriminate him

in the charges they alleged against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That they did not do so, is not to be explained away upon the supposition that the deliverance of his companions stopped proceedings against their chief. Certainly had this chapter been the composition of a pseudo-Daniel or the record of a fictitious event, Daniel would have been introduced and his immunity explained. B. C.

**12, 13.** The way in which the "Chaldeans" describe the three recusants betrays their motive in accusing them. "Certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon" could not but be envied and hated, since their promotion wounded both national pride and professional jealousy. The form of the accusation was skillfully calculated to rouse a despot's rage. They "have not regarded thee" is the head and front of their offending. The inflammable temper of the king blazed up according to expectation, as is the way with tyrants. His passion of rage is twice mentioned (verses 13, 19), and, in one of the instances, is noted as distorting his features. What a picture of ungoverned fury as of one who had never been thwarted! It is the true portrait of an Eastern despot. A. M.

**13-15.** The king orders these offenders before him, and gives them one more trial to test their obedience. His last words, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" shows that as yet he has practically no just sense of the power of the Supreme Being, or indeed of any god higher than mortal man. H. C.

**14. Is it of purpose?** A question this from a potent monarch backed with a wrathful threatening; enough to have put Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the stand. Their answer must provoke their God or their king. But did they hesitate a moment? Were they at all in suspense? No; they had faith in their Lord, and they boldly replied, "O king, we need not answer thee in this matter. Our cause lies before our God; we are not left to ourselves; our present life, our immortal soul is in His hands. If you command us into the fiery furnace, our God will be with us; we shall be safe; He will deliver us; either our bodies that we shall not be burnt, or if they are, the burning furnace shall be only as a fiery chariot to convey our souls to heaven and glory." See the power of faith; according as they believed so it was; the Son of God was with them; the fire could not hurt them. W. Mason.

But we may draw another lesson from this

truer apostle of his god. He is not the only instance of apparent religious zeal, which is at bottom nothing but masterfulness. "You shall worship my god, not because he is God, but because he is mine." That is the real meaning of a great deal which calls itself "zeal for the Lord." The zealot's own will, opinions, fancies, are crammed down other people's throats, and the insult in not thinking or worshipping as he does is worse in his eyes than the offence against God. A. M.

**16-18.** "We have no need to answer thee," we are in no straits; are not pressed by any stringent necessity as men who tremble in fear for their lives; for if thou shouldst do thy worst—cast us into the fiery furnace—our God is able to deliver us; and if He should not, we are ready for the result, let come what may. Be it known to thee, therefore, we *will not* serve thy gods nor worship thy golden image! This was moral heroism and devoted piety, both of the highest order. H. C.

It is due to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to remember that, in the unexplained absence of Daniel, who may have been in a remote part of the empire upon official duties, these men exhibited the same heroism, the same superior intellectuality, and the same devotion to principle which characterized Daniel. One of the sublimest passages attributed to men of God in any age is in these words: "We will not do it; we will not argue about it; and if our God in His infinite wisdom will not deliver us, we will still believe Him, die in the furnace, and will not worship thy false god nor obey thee in this matter." This was stronger than if they had contented themselves with the assertion that God would surely deliver them. Many would begin with equal courage, expecting deliverance, and quail and fail if deliverance delayed to come. But these men would die, in any event, rather than worship. J. M. Buckley.

God could keep them out of the fiery furnace, or save them in it, if He chose to do so. But whatever His decision might be on that point, their decision to do right and take the consequences was made up unalterably in advance. And there is no other spirit than this in which God can be served faithfully. When the question comes between lying and dying, it is safe to say that, whether you die or not, you won't lie. So when the question comes between dishonesty and beggary, between treachery and ruin, between faithlessness in little matters or in larger, and the loss of everything that you have held dear in the life that

is, you can say of the peril: "If it be so, our God is able to deliver us; but if not, we will not swerve from the right." What a world this would be if God's children would all take that stand and stick to it! H. C. T.

Duty is sovereign. The obligation to resist all temptations to go against conscience is unaffected by consequences. There may be hope that God will not suffer us to be harmed, but whether He does or not should make no difference to our fixed resolve. That temper of lowly faith and inflexible faithfulness which these Hebrews showed in the supreme moment, when they took their lives in their hands, may be as nobly illustrated in the small difficulties of our peaceful lives. The same laws shape the curves of the tiny ripples in a basin and of the Atlantic rollers. No man who cannot say "I will not" in the face of frowns and dangers, be they what they may, and stick to it, will do his part. He who has conquered regard for personal consequences, and does not let them deflect his course a hair's breadth, is lord of the world. A. M.

**19-23.** In great rage at such fearless opposition to his will, the despotic monarch ordered them to be cast into a fiery furnace heated to its utmost intensity. The practice of punishment by burning alive had existed among the Assyrians for centuries, as we learn from both monumental and historical notices. The furnace was either a fire kindled in the open court, or a structure in the form of a pit, with one of its sides open to receive the fuel for the flame.

Bound probably with chains, in their usual garments (of the particulars of which we have no knowledge), they were taken up by the king's soldiers, and cast into the mouth of the blazing furnace. So urgent was the king's wrath and so hot was the flame, that the near approach proved instantly fatal to the soldiers who fulfilled the despot's command. They were slain by the flame. This was the only destruction wrought by the king's maddened passions. The burning of the executioners only emphasized the more this signal miracle of protection to these servants of the Most High God. As for the intended victims, the flames only melted their chains, and left them free to rise and stand unhurt amid the fire. B.

God did not interfere to prevent them from being cast into the furnace. Thus, too, He often suffers His dear children to be cast bound into the furnace of sore affliction, from which they cannot extricate themselves. He does not always preserve from distress, but He preserves in the midst of distress. W. H. G.

**24, 25.** *What the astonished king beheld.* He saw *four* men walking in the midst of the fire. The *three* who had been bound were loose. The flame had not harmed them. A *fourth* form there was, whose majestic appearance impressed the amazed monarch as a *son of the gods*. This, we may believe, was no other than the angel of the Lord, who so often had appeared to His people, and who was none other than Christ the Son of God. Never before had He appeared to any but chosen friends of God. Now He manifests Himself to this heathen monarch, as the deliverer and companion of these His persecuted saints.

A striking fulfilment was here of the Divine promise uttered by Isaiah (43: 2). B.—The flame recognized the presence of Him that made it, and bowed reverently before the Son of God, just as on other occasions the waters of the sea owned Him, the winds heard Him, and all nature responded to Him, and obeyed Him. The flame lost its power to consume, because it was commanded not to do so by Him that kindled it at the first. These Hebrews, we are told by Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "*quenched the violence of fire*" by their faith. *Cumming*.

His walking with them there seems to imply that they were conscious of His presence and sustained by His comfort, like Stephen in the agony of his martyrdom, and they would doubtless recognize in him the "Angel Jehovah," who had so often shown Himself to their fathers, and who had promised, "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." P. S.

How uniform and majestic the testimony that rises from all the lands and ages of faith to this simple truth, that it is not rules of conduct, not systems of ethics, not patterns of propriety, not eloquent expositions that inspire the believing and faithful heart with its immortal energy and peace, but the simple secret assurance of being as one with the Lord Jesus, and resting in His almighty friendship! Where is the fiery furnace deep enough to burn despair into our souls, if we can see walking with us through the fire the form of the Son of God? What, then, is the tribulation, or famine, or sword, or nakedness that shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord? The mystery of that unity where He who is one with God yet cried, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," is not for us to understand. Yet the prayer of promise, "They shall be with Me where I am," is for us to lay hold of and breathe again and again, when we

are aching and alone and troubled. So believers have found. *Anon.*

**26, 27.** *At Nebuchadnezzar's bidding they come forth unharmed from the fire.* The king's spirit was utterly subdued within him. He acknowledges the presence of the Most High God with these His servants. He recognizes the perfect freedom of these men, and their ability to come forth at their will. But now instantly his command was obeyed, and God's servants came forth from the fire. Then around them gathered princes and officers of every class with the king in the midst, intensely moved at the strange result. The fire had not harmed their bodies, nor even was there a hair of their heads singed, nor their flowing garments scorched; nay, even the smell of fire was not found upon them.

**28, 29.** But the result wrought as marvelous a change upon the temper of the king. His wrath yielded to admiration for the faithful heroism of these men. From the senseless deity that he had reared upon the plain, he turns to behold and to acknowledge anew the God of heaven. This God had proved His power to protect them that trusted in Him. Again as on the previous occasion he recognizes the being as the might of the God of Israel. He publishes a decree forbidding the people under his dominion to utter anything against the God of these Hebrews. He went indeed no further than this. His change of conviction and action was based upon the superior might of God. He offered to Jehovah no worship or reverence, but remained an idolator. B.—Though the heathen king is again convinced of the power and greatness of the God of the Jews, it will be observed that the proclamation is only a decree of punishment against those who calumniate Him. It does not declare Him God alone, and the other gods mere idols. *Rose.*

**28.** The things he specially notes as done by them are—that they “trusted in their God” (he had never seen such trust before!); that they “*changed*” in the sense of disregarding and finally reversing the king's mandate; and that they “yielded their bodies” to be burned if the Lord should not be pleased to protect them. These were new developments for Babylon! When in all the foregone ages had such things been seen in that proud city? H. C.

A steadfast faith in God will produce a steadfast faithfulness to God. Now this honorable testimony, thus publicly borne by the king himself to these servants of God, we may well

think would have a good influence upon the rest of the Jews that were, or should be, captives in Babylon. Their neighbors could not with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do that, which their brethren were so highly applauded by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these His servants would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, for which end they were sent into captivity; and when it had had that blessed effect upon them they might be assured that God would deliver them out of that furnace, as now He delivered their brethren out of this. H.

Always and everywhere men fall back and give place to those who practise a religion which costs them something. The world is looking on to see if ours is a religion *which costs us anything*. Do we really feel the sacrifice of any one thing for Christ? Does our life unmistakably and inevitably remind men of Christ's life? Does it probably remind *Him* of it? Does He see in it of the travail of His soul that which satisfies Him? This is the style of questioning by which the world is silently putting our religion to the test. *Phelps.*

**29.** One important result of these events is a special decree, forbidding the people of his entire realm to say aught amiss against the God of these Hebrews. Apparently, the reason assigned went forth with the decree—viz., “Because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort”—a distinct recognition of the God of Israel as higher and mightier than all the gods of the heathen. This decree went over all his realm, a grand manifesto, setting forth the conviction of this autocrat on his throne in favor of the great Jehovah. Naturally it would carry with it an account more or less full of the circumstances which had called it forth. Officers of government from his whole realm were its witnesses. Hence these events must have sown broadcast some ideas of the true God among the thousands and probably millions of his subjects. H. C.

**30.** Either his sense of justice or his fear of the Hebrews' God led him to restore the three men to their offices and to advance them to higher positions of trust. B.—He justly promoted them in his kingdom; but he had no honors to confer, after what Heaven had made to shine and flame upon them on that great day. He could not confer honor on those who had triumphed over him and his gods. And as to them, there could remain, after that day,

but one thing more that was sublime enough for their ambition—the translation by death! *Foster.*

The contents of this chapter, apart from the consideration of the event as a miracle, may be summed up in Archdeacon Rose's words: "Never was the promise, 'when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isa. 43: 2), so wonderfully fulfilled as here. Doubtless it was ever the source of spiritual comfort to the Christian martyr, but here it was fulfilled in the letter." *B. C.*

The great lesson to be gathered from this miracle of deliverance is simply that men who sacrifice themselves for God find in the sacrifice abundant blessing. They may, or may not, be delivered from the external danger. Peter was brought out of prison the night before his intended martyrdom; James, the brother of John, was slain with the sword; but God was equally near to both, and both were equally delivered from "Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." The disposal of the outward event is in His hands, and is a comparatively small matter. But no furnace into which a man goes because he will be true to God, and will not yield up his conscience, is a tenth part so hot as it seems, and it will do no real harm. The fire burns bonds, but not Christ's servants, consuming many things that entangled, and setting them free. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts" even if we have to walk in the furnace. No trials faced in obedience to God will be borne alone. A present Christ will never fail His servants, and will make the furnace cool even when its fire is fiercest. *A. M.*

*The central, comprehensive, and significant truth* herein conveyed is expressed in the words of Christ: "*He that will lose his life for My sake shall save it.*" *B.*

Christ has been with His Church from the beginning of the world. The bush may blaze, but God is in the bush, and it cannot be consumed. His saints may suffer, but their sufferings shall only spread their faith, and glorify

their Lord. And all things, the blunders of its friends, the bitterness of its enemies, the silence of its advocates, the opposition of its foes—all things, in height and depth, shall aid the cause of Christ, and prosper that Church of which He is the foundation and blessed hope. *Cumming.*

Thousands in later times have walked calmly to the stake, cheered by the words of these young Hebrew exiles. Their great service to the world of subsequent ages is their teaching by word and act *the nature and the working of a religion of principle.* They illustrate the truth that a religion of principle is *founded on intelligent convictions of truth, so fixed in the heart as to be beyond the reach of argument.* Their answer to the king's command has been the watchword of martyrs from that day to this: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. . . . But be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods." There is a state of religious experience, possible to every Christian, of which this is a sample. It is a state in which the believer no longer needs argument to support his convictions, and is no longer open to argument against them. Certain central truths of religion are fixed in his very soul. They have been settled once for all and forever. They are thus settled, because they have become matters of *experience.*

The religion of principle consists pre-eminently in *obedience to the sense of duty, without regard to consequences.* So far as it appears from the story of these "men in the fire," this was their reasoning, and the whole of it: "We have only to do *right*, in the fear of God." Not a word appears, except a sublime assurance that God will save them, but a more sublime purpose to obey Him whether He will or not. The religion of principle carries with it a profound sense of a personal God. "Our God whom we serve." This is the first and last and ruling thought of these youthful heroes. Duty is no abstraction to them. They are not philosophers. They are simply believers in a living God. *Phelps.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTER IV.

**4 : 1** NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell  
 2 in all the earth ; peace be multiplied unto you. It hath seemed good unto me to shew the  
 3 signs and wonders that the Most High God hath wrought toward me. How great are his  
 signs ! and how mighty are his wonders ! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his  
 dominion is from generation to generation.  
 4, 5 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a  
 dream which made me afraid ; and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head  
 6 troubled me. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me,  
 7 that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. Then came in the  
 magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers ; and I told the dream before  
 8 them ; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. But at the last  
 Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god,  
 9 and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods : and I told the dream before him, *saying*, O Belte-  
 shazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee,  
 and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the inter-  
 10 pretation thereof. Thus were the visions of my head upon my bed : I saw, and behold a  
 11 tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was  
 strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all  
 12 the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for  
 all : the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the  
 13 branches thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed,  
 14 and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. He cried aloud, and said  
 thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit :  
 15 let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless leave  
 the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass  
 of the field ; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts  
 16 in the grass of the earth : let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be  
 17 given unto him ; and let seven times pass over him. The sentence is by the decree of the  
 watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones : to the intent that the living may  
 know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he  
 18 will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men. This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have  
 seen : and thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, forasmuch as all the wise men of  
 my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation ; but thou art able, for  
 the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.  
 19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a while, and his thoughts  
 troubled him. The king answered and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the inter-  
 pretation, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that  
 20 hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine adversaries. The tree that thou sawest,  
 which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to  
 21 all the earth ; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for  
 all ; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the  
 22 heaven had their habitation : it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong ; for thy  
 greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.  
 23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and say-  
 ing, Hew down the tree, and destroy it ; nevertheless leave the stump of the roots thereof in  
 the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field ; and let it be  
 wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven  
 24 times pass over him ; this is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High,  
 25 which is come upon my lord the king : that thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwell-  
 ing shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and  
 shalt be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee ; till thou know  
 that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots ; thy kingdom shall be  
 27 sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O  
 king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and  
 thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor ; if there may be a lengthening of thy tran-  
 28, 29 quillity. All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months  
 30 he was walking in the royal palace of Babylon. The king spake and said, Is not this great  
 Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of my power and for  
 31 the glory of my majesty ? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from  
 heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken : the kingdom is departed from  
 32 thee. And thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the  
 field ; thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee ; until  
 thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever  
 33 he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar : and he was driven  
 from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his  
 34 hair was grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*. And at the end of the  
 days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned  
 unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever ;  
 for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation :  
 35 and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing : and he doeth according to his  
 will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his  
 36 hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? At the same time mine understanding returned  
 unto me ; and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and brightness returned unto me ;  
 and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me : and I was established in my kingdom,  
 37 and excellent greatness was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and  
 honour the King of heaven ; for all his works are truth, and his ways judgement : and those  
 that walk in pride he is able to abase.

**Chap. 4.** Of all historic figures, Nebuchadnezzar most strikingly represents the power of destruction. Like his own image on the plain of Dura, he towers over the ground he has cleared of every opponent from the Nile to the Euphrates. Above all, he had been the instrument in the hand of God to root out His people for their sins from the good land given to their fathers, but he had yet to learn that he himself was subject to their God. This lesson was taught him while he enjoyed the fruit of his victories in the city of Babylon, which he had made the wonder of the world by his "hanging gardens" and other splendid works ; and the appointed teacher was a young Hebrew of the first captivity, whose career at Babylon was almost a repetition of that of Joseph at the court of Pharaoh. P. 8.

The Book of Daniel is silent upon the life of Nebuchadnezzar during those twenty to thirty years which witnessed the gradual development of his greatness as a conqueror in the West. The notes on the later chapters of the books of Kings and Chronicles, and on such chapters of Jeremiah as the twenty-second and thirty-sixth, will give the reader a succinct account of much which then happened ; for example, of the wars in Judea, Phœnicia and Egypt. It was only after these wars that Nebuchadnezzar could have found time to give

himself thoroughly to those works of architectural adornment and utility which for some time had been slowly progressing ; and it was only after these wars that the description fairly applies to him—he was "at rest." It may be assumed that a man like Nebuchadnezzar—who considered himself (according to the inscription) "the chosen of Merodach, the god-born," and who was not only a soldier of the first rank, but also a "priest-king" of unquestioned intellectual greatness—could not pass through those many years of campaigning, and of contact with "nations and languages," without being arrested by one phenomenon—a phenomenon which asserted itself due to Divine interference. The Jews and their king were his captives ; Jerusalem and the sacred temple of the God of Israel lay in ruins. Prophets had foretold this ; and Nebuchadnezzar had a living witness to the truth of their prophecy and the sternness of Divine justice, in the presence of that vast Hebrew multitude which peopled the "Hallat" or "profane" quarter of Babylon. Think of it, as he would, from his heathen point of view, there was perpetually before him a proof that there was One who did "according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : none could stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou ?" (verse 35). "The pride of the king



and his humiliation by a severe judgment of God are the subjects of this chapter." It is also full of evidence of Daniel's gradual advance and greatness. Just as Ezekiel's testimony to Daniel's "righteousness" (Ezek. 14 : 14, 20) brings him forward as the example of what the Hebrew captive might be in the sight of his God, so this chapter tells of the esteem and confidence he had won from his royal master (4 : 8, etc.). It was the reward of twenty to thirty years' silent waiting and working. B. C.

Nebuchadnezzar has a second dream, predicting his own insanity ; his magicians and Chaldeans cannot give him its interpretation. Daniel gives it ; it takes place at the end of twelve months. The king is deposed from his throne and continues insane seven years. His reason then returns ; he resumes his sceptre, and ascribes honor and glory to the Most High God. II. C.

1. "These most wonderful events in the life of the king are narrated in his own words, apparently from a proclamation issued by him." Whether Nebuchadnezzar was the actual writer of the events detailed in this chapter, or Daniel simply recorded what happened and gave to it that half-narrative, half-personal form which the changes from the first to the third persons and *vice versa* have caused it to assume, is practically a matter of indifference. The undertone of genuineness which makes itself so unobtrusively felt to the Assyrian scholar when reading it is quite sufficient to decide the question of authenticity ; while the analogy of similar documents, and the attestation of the LXX. ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, give the preference to the first named view. B. C.

1-3. This entire chapter is in its nature a royal manifesto or proclamation, announcing to all the world the extraordinary ways of the great God in His providences toward the king. By "signs and wonders" he means the supernatural dreams, the predicted insanity, the moral ends which the Lord sought to gain by it, and the actual results. These terms are usually employed in the Scriptures to denote the supernatural works of God—those which are unlike the common course of natural events, and such as men are wont to conceive of therefore as *above* nature—supernatural. It is noticeable that the introduction to this manifesto recognizes "the High God" as the Supreme and Eternal Ruler, at the head of a kingdom which endures forever, and swaying a dominion which does not, like those of mortal men,

pass away with the lapse of human generations, but holds on, unaffected by time, from generation to generation. This manifesto is addressed, not to the people of his own vast realm alone, but to "all people, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth." This universality, coupled with the moral fitness and force of the document, render it truly magnificent and sublime. Think of it as translated into every spoken language throughout all the tribes of earth's entire population and sent to them from the once proud king of great Babylon and of the vast Chaldean empire ! A humble testimony that, great as this monarch of Babylon had been, the Most High God is immeasurably greater ; that glorious and powerful as his empire had been in the eyes of men, the kingdom of the great God is mightier far and exalted in far higher glory ! II. C.

4. **At rest and flourishing.** Significant words, which go far to indicate the period of his life referred to. Nebuchadnezzar was "resting" in undisputed possession of a "dominion" which extended "to the end of the earth" (verse 22) ; he was in his own house ; not now a warrior at the head of his army, but in that dwelling, that palace of which one small fragment alone remains (Layard, "Nineveh and Babylon," p. 506) ; he was "flourishing" like a tree ; a simile used by the king with distinct reference to his dream (verse 10), and conveying to the Oriental mind a recognized symbol of fresh, mighty growth.

9. *No secret troubleth thee.* It is thus that the king marks the difference between "the master" and the rest of the wise men. In language both courteous and appealing—when compared with that used on a former occasion, 2 : 5, 26—he asks from that power in Daniel which revealed secrets (2 : 47) the solution of his dream. B. C.

10-17. The dream is really in two parts : one part presented to the eye, the other to the ear ; the first part a great tree which the king saw, the second an oral declaration made by an angel from heaven, which he heard. The first part (verses 10-12) describes the tree—exceeding great, tall, strong, visible to the ends of the earth ; of immense foliage and most abundant fruit. The beasts repose under its shade ; the fowls of heaven dwell amid its branches, and all flesh is fed from its stores of fruit. The second part (verses 13-17) recites the audible proclamation. The king sees a glorious personage, here described as "a watcher, even a holy one, coming down from heaven." He is a watcher, one of God's un-

sleeping angels whom He puts in charge over portions of the vast providential agencies of His universe. The term angel contemplates this order of beings as *sent forth* on some mission, "angel" meaning a messenger. But the term "watcher" expresses their work equally well. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" (Heb. 1:14). Some are sent specially to minister to the heirs of salvation; others, as the Book of Daniel teaches (see chap. 10; 11:1; 12:1), are put in charge over the kingdoms of men—the great agents of the Most High in the execution of His providential purposes and government. In this case, "the watcher, an holy one," came down to finish out the dream by announcing the destiny of the tree. This he proclaims with a loud voice: "Hew down the tree, cut off its branches," etc., but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, firmly fixed there as if bound with a band of iron and brass. From this point the description slides insensibly from the figure to the reality—from the stump of the tree to the king himself, shorn of his glory. "Let it be wet with the dew of heaven," looks toward the insane king, outcast from human society and from the homes of men, taking his portion with the beasts of the earth. His heart changed from man's and a beast's heart given to him, indicate the utter loss for the time of his understanding and reason. He has dropped down from the grade of thinking, reasoning man to that of the unthinking, unreasoning beast. And this is to continue "until seven times have passed over him." The word "times" refers to the best known division of time, the year. It is (perhaps) a definite number for an indefinite—the real duration being possibly somewhat less than seven full years. God Himself has ordained this infliction upon the great king. He has done it for a special purpose here assigned—viz., that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, giving regal power to whom He will. H. C.

**16.** *Let his heart be changed.* (Cf. verse 25.) The plain interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's case, stripped of the prophetic figurative language, appears to be that he should be punished with madness, should fancy himself a beast, and live like a beast, but after some time should recover his reason and resume the government. *Bp. Newton.*

**17.** *To the intent that the living may know.* The intent of this matter was to give mankind a proof, in the fall and restoration of this mighty monarch, that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of God; that His

providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing crowns and sceptres always for the good of the faithful primarily, ultimately of His whole creation, but according to His will; by which we must understand a will perfectly independent and unbiassed by anything external; yet not an arbitrary will, but a will directed by the governing perfections of the Divine intellect; by God's own goodness and wisdom; and as justice is included in the idea of goodness, it must be a will governed by God's justice. *Bp. Horsley.*

**18.** The king submits this dream to Daniel for him to interpret. He is confident Daniel can do it, because "the spirit of the holy gods is in him." This recognition of the great doctrine that God's spiritual presence and power are with His people, that He can and sometimes does reveal to them His own exclusively Divine foreknowledge of events, is a remarkable testimony from the greatest king and the master-mind of the age.

**20-26.** Here is the interpretation. The great tree is no other than the great king. This description corresponds in most respects with that given above (verses 10-17), save only that here it is applied to the king, and remarkably, the clause which referred most plainly to his insanity, "Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given him," is here omitted. In verses 25, 26 the agents referred to, "*they shall drive thee from men;*" "*they shall make thee eat grass;*" "*they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven,*" are apparently those angelic beings whom God employs in His providential administration, controlling the activities of men and bringing about the course of events in harmony with the Divine will. That the stump and roots are left living and strong in the earth denoted that his kingdom should still remain sure to him and should return to his hand after he should have fully seen and heartily admitted that the God of heaven (for brevity's sake here "the heavens") does rule. This preservation of the kingdom to him by preventing any successor from obtruding himself upon the throne, may, not improbably, have been due to this known prediction and to Daniel's personal influence. Daniel was in a position to have almost unlimited control in this thing.

**27.** As the time of this calamity was not fixed, it might be postponed by the king's repentance; indeed it might have been altogether prevented if he had become truly penitent. Why not as really as the destruction of Nineveh foretold by Jonah, the precise date of

which moreover was set to ninety days. Hence the way is open for Daniel to exhort his sovereign in all fidelity and love to "break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor," since thus he might, nay would, prolong this present peace and prosperity. This noble example of manly and Christian fidelity to his sovereign is worthy of all admiration, and of course imitation. Prompted by such manifest love and in manner so respectful to the king, and yet with so much personal dignity, it must have fallen upon the king's mind with great force. The sin specially indicated here, unrighteous oppression of the poor, looks very probably toward the terrible exactions of labor imposed upon his defenceless subjects (some of them captives of war) in those immense public works which were in the eyes of men the glory of his reign. H. C.

*Break off thy sins by righteousness.* Among the many accusations against the Book of Daniel, one of the most frivolous has been raised on this passage, as if Daniel taught the doctrine of human merit, and the atonement of our transgressions by virtuous actions. The word simply means "break off," make an end of thy sins by a change of life. It is almost equivalent to "sin no more" and change thy ways. *Rose.*

Whatever the impression, it did not last long. "All," in spite of the caution and the prayer, "came upon Nebuchadnezzar." Twelve months passed away—months of peace as regarded enemies without, and of work as regarded the embellishment of his capital. B. C.

**28-33.** It may be supposed that Daniel's faithful exhortation had some good moral influence on the king for a season. The impending calamity was deferred twelve months. But his goodness was as the morning cloud. When his pride resumed its sway over his heart, just while he was walking on the flat roof of his lofty palace, overlooking the splendor of that most splendid city, and saying, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?"—at that moment there came another voice; it fell from heaven. The dream was fulfilled! H. C.

**29, 30.** With the rise of the Chaldean hegemony under Nabopolassar, B. C. 625, and the utter overthrow of Nineveh, Babylon rose from its ashes more beautiful than ever. The great Nebuchadnezzar restored the city on

such a gigantic scale, and with such splendid adornment of wide streets, temples, palaces, and fortifications, that it may fairly be designated as the new creation of this powerful prince, who, in the East India House Inscription, says of his own work:

"Nebuchadnezzar I am, king of Babylon, whom Marduk, the great lord, created for a blessing to his city of Babylon. Ezagila and Ezida [the two great temples of Babylon and Borsippa] I caused to shine with the brilliancy of the sun, and the temples of the great gods with the brightness of day. Heretofore, from distant days, [and] until the reign of Nabopolassar king of Babylon, my father, many kings who reigned before me, whom the gods had called by name to the royal power, in [other] cities which they preferred, wherever they chose, built palaces, established their residence, heaped up their wealth in them, brought together their possessions; and only at the festival of the New Year, when the lord of the gods goes forth, did they come to Shuanna [the sacred name of Babylon]. Since Marduk created me for royal rule, [and] Nabû his legitimate son entrusted his peoples to me, I loved the building of their halls as my precious life. Besides Babylon and Borsippa, I reared and adorned no cities."

It is therefore intelligible when Nebuchadnezzar, standing on the terrace of his royal palace, which had been erected by the labor of subject kings and peoples, looked down upon the tumult below him, upon the broad mirror of the Euphrates, with its restraining walls and bridge-piers which still exist, and spoke the insolent words recorded in the Book of Daniel: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" *R. E. Thompson.*

Upon a terraced foundation was reared the royal palace; the roof was of immense cedar and cypress beams; the gates of sandal-wood, inlaid with ivory and ornamented with gold and silver; the pinnacle of white marble. On terraces connected by stairs were planted trees and shrubs; the hollow columns, filled with earth, served as receptacles for the roots of the largest trees; while extensive water-works brought from the Euphrates the water required for the gardens and the wells. Nebuchadnezzar's wife, a Median princess, had wished for those gardens, that she might enjoy, in the Babylonian valley, a view reminding her of her native hills and parks; and her husband, as if by enchantment, called them out of the

earth, "lavishly laid out for the wonder of mankind." . . . Below stretches the carefully kept park of Ezagila, from which projects the palace of Nabopolassar, and the pinnacle of the temple mirrored in the tranquilly-flowing Euphrates, animated by hundreds of ships, whose masts form a boundless forest. Below Ezagila we descry the large Euphrates bridge, supported by columns of hewn stone, also a monument of extraordinary labor and art. Not far from the river, toward the southwest, rises, in the wonderfully clear air, the "pyramid" of Babylon's sister city, Borsippa, the temple of the seven spheres of heaven and earth—namely, the seven planets. And wherever the eye ranges we see on all hands houses and gardens, fine fields and palm-groves, towns and villages—yea, a landscape of truly heavenly beauty. Now, indeed, can we understand why Nebuchadnezzar, wandering upon his palace walls, exclaimed: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" *Friedrich Delitzsch.*

The Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar occupied a square of which each side was fourteen miles in length, and was bisected by the Euphrates diagonally from northwest to southeast. This square was inclosed by a deep moat, flooded from the river. The clay excavated in digging the moat, moulded into bricks and laid in bitumen, formed the walls of the city. These walls, more than three hundred feet high and more than seventy thick, and protected by parapets, afforded a commodious driveway along their top of nearly sixty miles, needing only aerial bridges over the Euphrates River. The waters of the river were forced to flow through the city between quays of masonry which equalled the walls in thickness and height. The walls were pierced at equal intervals for a hundred gates, and each gateway closed with double leaves of ponderous metal, swinging upon bronze posts built into the wall. Fifty broad avenues, crossing each other at right angles, joined the opposite gates of the city, and divided it into a checker-board of gigantic squares. The river quays were pierced by twenty five gates like those in the outer walls. One of the streets was carried across the river upon an arched bridge, another ran in a tunnel beneath the river-bed, and ferries plied continually across the water where the other streets abutted. The great squares of the city were not all occupied by buildings. Many of them were used as gardens and even farms, and the great fertility of the soil, caused by irrigation,

producing two and even three crops a year, supplied food sufficient for the inhabitants in ease of siege. Babylon was a vast fortified province rather than a city. *W. B. Wright.*

Not only does the monarch claim in various lengthy documents to have renovated the walls, the palace, and the various temples of the city, but there is the most unmistakable evidence that his claim to have rebuilt the whole city is just. Of the ancient bricks dug up on the site of Babylon, *at least nine tenths bear the name and title of this monarch.* It is clear that his renovation of the place must have amounted to an almost complete rebuilding of it. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" was thus a most natural exclamation in the mouth of this king, though it would have been wholly unfit in the mouth of any other Babylonian monarch mentioned in Scripture. His inscriptions add that, besides the great temple of Nebo or of the Seven Spheres at Borsippa, he built there at least five others, together with a temple to the Moon-god at Beth Ziba, and one to the Sun-god at Larsa or Senkareh. Altogether there is reason to believe that he was one of the most indefatigable of all the builders that have left their mark upon the world in which we live. He covered Babylonia with great works. He found Babylon a perishing city of unbaked clay; he left it one of durable burnt brick, unless it had been for human violence, capable of continuing, as the fragment of the *Kasr* has continued, to the present day. *G. R.*

The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel have been literally fulfilled. Notwithstanding more than one revolt of the Babylonian people, and the magnificent schemes of Alexander for restoring the city to its ancient greatness, the empire has been dissolved and the city itself destroyed. To use some of the language of the prophecies, "her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down." Nor is this all that has befallen her; "the sower is cut off from Babylon, and he that handleth the sickle in time of harvest," for "the drought is upon the waters" which refreshed her territory with fertilizing irrigation. She is become a desolation among the nations without an inhabitant, and of the numerous travellers who pass near her site on their way to and from Baghdad scarcely any except a few Europeans bent on antiquarian research take any notice of the ruins of Babylon. *II. W. Philpott.*

**30.** Pride, reaching out its hand in Eden—pride, lifting up its head in Babylon—pride, to-day, deifying the laws of nature and out-

lawing the Deity—pride, flattering itself with fantastic theories of development, according to which the universe, beginning with unorganized particles, culminates in man, and man culminates in the philosopher, so that the representative of this theory stands on the very pinnacle of the universe, everything below him and nothing above—pride, rejecting redemption as a work of supererogation, and spurning revelation as a hindrance, rather than a help to man's all-sufficient reason—pride, breaking out in the infamous blasphemer or lurking in the bosom of the self-complacent moralist, who patronizes religion without stooping to partake of its privileges—pride, everywhere and always, is the root-sin of our ruined race, and in this regard the king of Babylon finds his counterpart in every sinful human soul. *P. S. Henson.*

We may bear about with us a heart like Nebuchadnezzar's, although we dwell within a beggar's hut. Not sensuality, as men so often suppose, but pride, is the highest and the deepest, the first and the last sin. It goes with the worldling to his social circle, steals with the scholar into his lonely cell; and even when we have entered our solitary bedchamber, we have not shut it out. How many, who are blameless and worthy of respect before the world, inscribe on the edifice of their outward prosperity and moral excellence, "This is the great Babylon, that I have built!" Thus the human heart by nature is arrogant in prosperity, and thus we remain until grace begins the good work in us, by snatching from us the state-robe of haughtiness, and clothing us in the garment of humility.

And for this end the great God is incessantly active; indeed, in Nebuchadnezzar we see the position which God assumes toward the haughty sinner. He *harks* long with them; He is long-suffering, because He is eternal. He allows the Nebuchadnezzars for successive years to build the proud walls of Babylon; the tree may be high and strong, and yet no voice from heaven, "Cut it down," resounds above its branches. Meanwhile, God *warns* the haughty sinner earnestly, as He did Nebuchadnezzar; first by means of his remarkable vision, and after that by Daniel's infallible exposition of it. Nay, He does not let the defiant man pass to his ruin without warning; in the unquiet dream of our life, we hear at every turning voices from the unseen world calling us to repentance and humility; and on all sides Daniels stretch forth the finger warningly, in order in a higher name to say to us: "Let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and

break off thy sins by righteousness" (verse 27). *Van O.*

**33.** Nothing can be sadder than a life made for God and Godlikeness grovelling in the dust. We read with pity of the great king who was driven from men, who dwelt among the beasts and was made to eat grass as oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. Yet God's angels see this sad story repeated continually in this world. Men and women made for nobleness and glory are found crawling on the earth and living only for earthly things. The true life must set its affections on things above, where Christ sitteth. We should train ourselves to live for things that we can carry with us into the eternal years. No other life is worthy of an immortal being. *J. R. M.*

What happened during this madness? "The counsellors" and "lords" (verse 36) nearest to his person took charge of his government, perhaps under the presidency of the well-loved Median wife, Anytis, to gratify whose tastes the king had built the "hanging gardens" (Berosus); perhaps under that of the "chief of the Castles," whose predecessor had kept the kingdom for him at his father's death (*Journ. Asiat.*, 1870). His subjects would know that their lord was suffering from some terrible malady, even if they were told nothing of its intensity or nature. They waited till death should end the life of their great king, or till, in accordance with prophetic rumor (cf. verse 26), health should once more be his. His power was too assured, his conquests too thorough to be imperilled by the absence of his own personal supervision. As events proved, the duration of the illness caused no confusion, no alteration in the political and social unity of his empire. *B. C.*

**33-37.** No doubt he was constantly watched at a distance, and his safety duly protected, while his son Evil-merodach assumed the regency until his father should be restored to his right mind. This did not occur until the time appointed—seven years—had passed; and then—it is the king himself who relates the facts in a proclamation published on his recovery—"At the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes unto heaven;" that first look to heaven—that mute appeal of the brute-man, was not in vain—"Mine understanding returned to me;" and what was the first impulse and use of his restored understanding? "I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him that liveth forever and ever." God's

victory over the proudest of men was complete. He proceeded to confess that before Him "all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" In this conviction he continued after, on perceiving the change that had taken place in him, his counsellors and his lords repaired to him, and brought him back to his palace and his kingdom; for he ends in extolling "the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride, He is able to abase." *Kitto*.

As the event stood unconnected with any known natural cause, it must have been beyond the ken of any foresight short of the Divine; and it follows incontestably that the prediction and the accomplishment of it were both from God. The king's restoration to power and grandeur had also been predicted; and this took place at the predicted time, independently of any natural cause, and without the use of any human means. And the evidence of these extraordinary occurrences, of the prediction, the fall and the restoration, is perhaps the most undeniable of anything which rests upon mere human testimony. The king himself, upon his recovery, published a proclamation in every part of his vast empire, giving an account of all which had befallen him, and in conclusion giving praise and honor to the King of heaven, acknowledging that "all His works are truth, and His ways judgment, and that those who walk in pride He is able to abase." The evidence of the whole fact, therefore, stands upon this public record of the Babylonian empire, which was preserved word for word in this chapter, of which it makes indeed the whole. This chapter therefore is not Daniel's writing, but Nebuchadnezzar's. *Bp. Horsley*.

The silence of contemporaneous or historical documents is not a disproof of the genuineness of Daniel's account. The Babylonian royal records were probably, like the Assyrian, carefully written in the form of regular annals, and dealt with military campaigns, spoiliations and cruelties. They rarely, if ever, recorded episodes of private life or conveyed moral lessons. Such records were reserved for private and separate tablets, such as the recovered library of Assurbanipal has furnished in illustration of Assyrian royal wills, contracts of barter and sale, proverbs, etc. A record of the madness of Babylon's greatest king would be in the

highest degree improbable; though the memory of it survived for years (verse 22). The native historians would be the last to furnish it. All mention of his illness would be omitted from the annals of his reign, just as all mention of the destruction by the angel of the Lord of the army of Sennacherib is absent from the numerous annals of that monarch. *B. C.*

**34, 35.** The return of understanding to Nebuchadnezzar is marked by a beautiful assertion of the supremacy of God in the whole universe. It is so grand in its conception, so simple and yet so emphatic in its language, that it may almost be considered as an inspired utterance like those of the prophet Balaam. The influence of the Hebrew captives begins also to be felt in religion, and we see the first beginning of the fermentation of the leaven which was to leaven the world. The captivity and the plantation of the colony of Jews in Alexandria were preparations, in part, of the heathen mind for the reception of the Gospel. They were the first foundation of missionary work, which began on a limited scale in the propagation of the faith of the Jews through their colonies. The foundation being thus laid in the days of the ancient faith, the missionary efforts of the apostolic age were rendered possible. *Rose*.

On one magnificent portal of the great mosque in Damascus, once a Christian cathedral, still remains engraven the inscription in Greek, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations!" There stand the words, unread by the Moslem. We take them as a silent prophecy that the day is coming when this dark land shall be Christ's, and He shall reign forever. *Tristram*.

**34.** The kingdom of heaven is an everlasting kingdom, can be such only because it is an empire of life, over whose broad territory flits no shadow of death, in whose structure is no element of weakness. It inaugurates nothing less than a thorough, comprehensive mastery, whose grasp cannot be broken. It looks to the sanctification of body, soul and spirit. It cleanses the fountains of domestic life. It re-creates languages and literatures. It breathes on the sails of commerce, and lays its bold hands on the rudder of State, until "Holiness to the Lord" shall flame from every masthead, and be proclaimed from every capitol. It means to seize and to hold all the strategic points of human activity, and range unchallenged and honored over all the highways of a busy world. Such a conception of the king-

dom God means to establish is not to be measured numerically, but ethically; not by the arithmetic of conversions, but by the reorganization of heathen homes and literatures and governments. Christianity is not only a religion of personal salvation, and of salvation in the narrow sense of getting men into heaven; it makes a heaven below as well as conducting to one above and beyond; it means to transfigure into celestial beauty every form of earthly life—its homes, its traffic, its industries, its restless, adventurous thought, its art, its social movements, its political councils. Numbers alone do not tell the story of evangelization; the seeding and the promised fruitage are vastly greater than the gathered harvest. *Behrends.*

With the Advent-light the world silently began to be another world. And the Power set working to bring this change about made it unlike all other revolutions. It wrought without violence, noise, ambition, or parade, "not with observation." It went on not by destruction, but construction; not tearing down, but building up. When the sword was drawn it was because human hands were used, and the obstinacy of the old system would let a path be made for the new in no other way. Generally it moved in among the kingdoms of this world according to the great anthem that announced it when it was born, peacefully seeking glory for God by good-will to men—spreading as morning is spread upon the mountains, as a harmony spreads through the spaces and arches of a sanctuary. Hence, inasmuch as it must take an organic form, after its Living Head, and be a kingdom, it was called a kingdom of life. Life was a great word with it. Its founder was the Life-giver. "I am come," He said, "that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly." The change was first in the seats of life, within—coming gradually out into doings or fruit, as the way of life is—from a hidden seed to root, germ, blade and ear; into common labor, elevating it; into homes, purifying them by honoring woman and consecrating childhood; into commerce, hallowing it by the spirit of integrity; into education, making the training of conscience and faith, our loftiest capacities, the crown of all other culture; into worship, directing it to the One God, worshipped in spirit and in truth. Men of our time think they see a grander future in store for the people and for the world. They are right if they look for an age of greater nearness to the Son of Man. The heralds go out. Commerce, science, discovery, education,

nature interpreted, sea and sky and land comprehended, humanity awakened, the universe explored, every law traced—these are messengers that will not only foresee, but help bring in the millennium they predict, if they labor and move together in the faith of the great reconciliation, for the righteousness and peace, for the love and purity of God. For then these are manifestations of the kingdom of His Son. F. D. II.

35. The Scriptures fully reveal the doctrine of a superintending Providence. They assert a sovereign personal pleasure ruling in every province of the universe. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." They declare that this Supreme Mind is concerned with the minutest events that transpire. Not a sparrow falls without our Heavenly Father, and the very hairs of our heads are all numbered. God's hand controls the elements, guides the car of Revolution, holds the reins of State, feeds the improvident ravens. This doctrine has in it a mighty practical force. There is a Providence in this world. It walks and works in the midst of us. God is in human history. His purposes go forth on all the tracks of creative agency. There is, indeed, no visible throne, there are no manifest symbols of royalty. His footsteps are in the sea; darkness is His pavilion. There is nothing but the result, unveiling itself from the secrets of His councils, that tells us God is working. When and where He will interpose, by what instrument and for what ends, subordinate and ultimate, it is not given us to know. This secrecy baffles resistance, strengthens faith, and leaves on men a deeper awe before the power that, unseen and untraceable, manages all human affairs. *A. L. Stone.*

Amid the seeming irregularity and confusion which distract the world, amid all the failures in human schemes and calculations which are daily taking place, amid the horrors of war, the fall of kingdoms, and the ruins of empire, there is one grand, unchangeable purpose which never fails, but which meets its accomplishment alike in the frustration or success of all other purposes. Every event in nature or in grace is simply an evolution of that grand purpose; and could the thread of this purpose be traced by the limited intellect of man in all its hearings and relations, chaos would exhibit regularity, and order and harmony would rise from confusion. *Thornwell.*

When we pray "Thy will be done," we pray that God may so rule, that to the utmost ends of the earth, and in the minutest actions of men, and in all the arrangements of life, there may be the easily visible impress of God's will. This we pray for, but more directly that our circumstances may be so ordered as to enable us to carry out most effectually the design of God with us, and that we may be so gifted with wisdom, courage, and self command, as to see and follow out the line of conduct most appropriate to us where God has set us. Praying thus, we are strengthened for all duty, whether it be active or sorely passive. We find in all that happens to us an answer to this prayer, and instead of being dismayed, as those who have not prayed that the will of God may be done, we find, in every change and seeming chance of life, new scope for carrying on the work of God, our share in His plan; and for our ordinary days which pass as yesterday passed, we find no healthier influence to give them a uniform tone and character than to

write on the threshold of each, "Thy will be done." *Dods.*

Thus ends the Scripture record of Nebuchadnezzar's life, but his life did not end then. For some years he retained "the glory" of his kingdom; and when he died at Babylon in the forty-fourth year of his reign (B.C. 561) he was still in peaceful possession of his kingdom. B. C.

The Lord had great purposes to answer by this Chaldean king, and He accomplished those purposes, even though that king would not bow his whole heart to truth and to God. He made all that king's frailties as well as his nobler qualities of character subserve his own glory and praise; drew from him reiterated testimonials to the majesty, justice and glory of Jehovah, and gave them to the kings and princes of all the earth to whom this revelation should ever come, for their admonition and instruction. Here we leave this greatest and perhaps best of all the sovereigns of the Chaldean empire. H. C.

## DANIEL, CHAPTER V.

**5:1** BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, whilst he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the wall that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spake and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were perplexed. Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him: and the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, *I say*, thy father, made him master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of dark sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

**13** Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The king spake and said unto Daniel,



Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah? I have heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. And now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing. But I have heard of thee, that thou canst give interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven: until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed. And this is the writing that was inscribed, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

For the twenty-three years between the accession of Evil-merodach and the fall of Babylon (B.C. 561-538) there is a gap in the Scripture history. The Book of Daniel passes at once to the capture of the city and the death of Belshazzar, who is called the son of Nebuchadnezzar; but this word need not signify more than a direct successor, Jeremiah, whose prophecies of this period are almost as definite as histories, predicts that all nations should serve Nebuchadnezzar, and *his son*, and *his son's son* until the very time of the land came; and the Chronicles state that the Jews were servants to him and *his sons* until the reign of the kingdom of Persia. Our chief secular authorities for the period, Berossus, Herodotus, Ctesias, the Canon, and Josephus, amid many discrepancies of detail, yet agree sufficiently to guide us to probable conclusions, with the aid of the inscriptions on the monuments. The succession of kings seems to have been as follows:

B.C.	Years of Reign.
561. EVIL-MERODACH, the son of Nebuchadnezzar.....	2
559. NERIGLISSAR, sister's husband to Evil-merodach, a usurper; perhaps the same as Nergal-sharezer, the Kab-mag ( <i>Chief of the Magi</i> ? Jer. 39: 3, 13).....	3½
556. LABOROSORACHON, his son, killed by a conspiracy, and the family of Nebuchadnezzar restored.....	6½
555. NABONADUS, or Nabonedus ( <i>Nabu-nûd</i> ) the LABYNETUS II. of Herodotus, probably the son or grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and the last king of Babylon.....	17
539. (about). BEL-SHAZZAR ( <i>Bil-shar-uzur</i> ), son of Nabonadus, becomes his associate in the kingdom, and governor of Babylon.....	2
538. Babylon taken by CYRUS, and governed by DARIUS THE MEDE.....	2
536. Death of Darius—Cyrus reigns alone—Restoration of the Jews.....	..
529. Death of Cyrus, after a reign of nine years from the taking of Babylon.....	9

It was during the reign of Nergigliassar t

the great revolution occurred which was destined to change the fate of Western Asia and to act powerfully on Europe, the overthrow of the old dynasty in Media and the foundation of the Persian empire by Cyrus the Great. Taking the length assigned to the reign of Cyrus by Herodotus, twenty-nine years, his accession falls in B.C. 558. P. S.

Till the last few years we had in the accounts of the fall of Babylon one of the most hopeless and irreconcilable discrepancies between Holy Scripture and profane history. The Bible represents Belshazzar as king of Babylon, and says that the city was captured during a festival by an unexpected entry of the Persians within the walls at night, and that the king was slain in the midst of his carousals. Berosus says that the last king was Nabonnedus; that he retired to Borsippa, was there blockaded, but that on his surrender his life was spared by Cyrus, who granted him a principality in Carmania, where he spent the rest of his days. With much of this Herodotus agrees, only he calls the king Labynetus. Thus the Bible and profane history seemed at hopeless variance; but in 1854 Sir H. Rawlinson deciphered some cylinders discovered among the ruins of the ancient Uruk of the Chaldees, and found that Nabonnedus had an eldest son, named Bel-shar-azar, whom he admitted to a share in the government. All is now clear. The father commanded the forces in the field; the son took charge of the capital and its garrison. He perished in the night attack; while his father, defeated in his attempt to relieve the city, withdrew to Borsippa, and being no longer formidable, now that Babylon had been captured, obtained from Cyrus honorable terms. R. P. S.

The most important facts, however, which the cylinders disclose are that the eldest son of Nabonnedus was named Bel-shar-azar, and that he was admitted by his father to a share in the government. This name is undoubtedly the Belshazzar of Daniel, and thus furnishes a key to the explanation of that great historical problem which has hitherto defied solution. We can now understand how Belshazzar, as *joint king* with his father, may have been governor of Babylon when the city was attacked by the combined forces of the Medes and Persians, and may have perished in the assault which followed; while Nabonnedus, leading a force to the relief of the place, was defeated and obliged to take refuge in the neighboring town of Borsippa (or Birs-i-Nimrud), capitulating after a short resistance, and being subsequently assigned, according to Berosus, an honorable

retirement in Carmania. By the discovery, indeed, of the name Bel-shar-azar, as appertaining to the son of Nabonnedus, we are for the first time enabled to reconcile authentic history (such as it is related by Herodotus and Berosus, and not as we find it in the romances of Xenophon or the fables of Ctesias) with the inspired record of Daniel, one of the bulwarks of our religion. H. Rawlinson.

**Chap. 5.** This chapter presents Belshazzar in his revelries and blasphemy; the awful hand that wrote his doom upon the palace wall; the utter failure of his astrologers to read and interpret the writing; how Daniel read and interpreted, and how it was fulfilled in that eventful night. H. C.

**1-5.** For nearly two years Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, had been encamped around Babylon. In a great battle outside the city, Nabonadius was defeated and compelled to find refuge at a distance from Babylon. Belshazzar therefore remained sole monarch in the city during the siege. But little care was felt by the king and people concerning the siege by Cyrus. Their situation seemed impregnable, since the walls of the city were of such prodigious height and thickness, and the number of their defenders was so great. More than this, the capital had been stored with sufficient provision to sustain the multitudes within its walls for many years. Under these circumstances it was that Belshazzar made a great feast to a thousand of his lords. While at the banquet, under the excitement of the wine-cup, the young king directed that the golden and silver vessels from the temple at Jerusalem should be brought from the treasure house, in which they had been stored by Nebuchadnezzar. Out of these sacred vessels the king and his princes dared to drink in praise of their gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone. And it was in the self-same hour of this desecration of vessels sanctified to Jehovah's worship that there came forth fingers of a man's hand, which, visibly to the king, traced certain letters upon the wall. B.

**4.** *Praised the gods of gold.* As they drank their wine in these once hallowed vessels, they triumphed over that God, to whom they had been consecrated; and magnified the power of their idols of gold and silver, etc., as if by their might these victories had been achieved, and these rich spoils obtained. *Bp. Hall.*—Such a wanton and sacrilegious insult deserved and called for exemplary punishment. *Windle.*

**5, 6.** Belshazzar might well stand aglaze to find himself thus confronted face to face with

the dread Jehovah whom he is purposely insulting. He has a sense of a present Power, more than human, in that strange *hand*, writing unknown words on his palace wall, and a guilty conscience helps him to forecast some fearful doom. The brightness of his countenance is gone (so the original imports); his mind is fearfully agitated; his knees smite against each other. How changed the scene from the glee of his blasphemous revelry to this paleness of cheek, convulsion of frame, remorse of conscience, and dread foreboding of doom! Many a sinner has had a like experience, and other thousands must have it! II. C.

7. *Shall be the third ruler.* Interpreters have found it difficult to explain why the proposal should have been made in this form instead of offering the second position in the kingdom, that which was next to the king himself, as was accorded to Joseph by Pharaoh. The discovery of the fact, however, that Belshazzar was at this time reigning conjointly with his father, Nabonned, solves the mystery at once; the next in authority after the two kings would be the third ruler in the kingdom. This incidental expression shows of itself, what appears more fully from this entire narrative, that the writer had an acquaintance with the state of things in Babylon at that time such as was possessed by no ancient historian that has come down to us. His statements find full confirmation and illustration in the monuments that have been but recently exhumed. It is just such a narrative as we might expect from Daniel, who was at this time within the walls, and was familiar with all the affairs of the government. To impute such an account to a Jew in the time of the Maccabees, as is done by those who deny the genuineness of this book, is simply preposterous.

8. *They could not read the writing.* This, coupled with the fact that the writing was promptly read by Daniel, has been thought to imply that the characters were Jewish, and as such not recognizable by the Babylonian wise men. Whether from this or from some other cause, they could gather no inkling of its meaning. They could not make out the words, and they could attribute to them no intelligible sense.

9. This confessed failure of his wise men increased the agitation and terror of the king and the perplexity of his lords.

10. *The queen.* Wife of Nabonned, mother of Belshazzar, and daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Her calm self-possession and dignified bearing, together with the respect that she evi-

dently commanded, show that she was a person of high character and marked ability. Many have supposed that she is to be identified with Queen Nitocris, of whom Herodotus speaks in such exalted praise, and to whom he attributes structures which bear the name of Nebuchadnezzar, as well as others which bear the name of Nabonned. *Came into the banquet house.* She now first entered the dining hall, having esteemed it unbecoming to participate in the entertainment in the absence of her royal husband, of whose fate she was probably ignorant. W. H. G.

13-16. The sacred record throws no light on the history of Daniel during the period since the death of Nebuchadnezzar. The fact that Belshazzar knows him only by report and tradition implies that he had retired from public office some years before; very probably at the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Evil-merodach, his son and successor, changed the policy of his father in some respects certainly—e.g., in taking Jehoiachin from prison to his favor and table. (See 2 K. 25: 27-30; Jer. 52: 31-34.) Berosus says of him, "This man, having used his authority in a lawless and diabolical manner, was slain by conspirators." He reigned but two years. Such revolutions in government would naturally have the effect of displacing Daniel. II. C.

16. *Doubts.* A man who gives way to doubt in Divine things, and suffers himself to be mastered by it, acts more like an insane person than a rational creature. He rejects clear and positive evidence, unanswerable argument, and permits his conduct to be determined by doubt. To escape from such an inveterate obliquity of mind, a man should fix his attention on positive acknowledged truth, and entrench himself behind it. There is acknowledged and undoubted truth enough to save him, and put a complete end to his doubts, if he will throw himself behind the truth; but if he neglect the truth and follow the doubts, he will wander in a wilderness of nettles till he come to the congregation of the dead. G. B. C.

Doubters never can dissolve or extirpate their doubts by any kind of speculative endeavor. They must never go after the truth to merely find it, but to practise it and live by it. There is no fit search after truth which does not, first of all, begin to live the truth it knows. Say nothing of investigation till you have made sure of being grounded everlastingly, and with a completely whole intent in the principle of right doing as a principle. Be right—that is, first of all, in what you know, and your soul

will be faithfully chiming with all you ought to know. All evidences are with you then, and you with them. Even if they seem to be hid, they will shortly appear and bring you their light. But this being right implies a great deal, observe, and especially these two things: first, that you pray for all the help you can get; for without this you cannot believe or feel that you truly want to be right. Secondly, that you consent in advance to begin a religious life, fulfilling all the sacrifices of such a life, provided you may find it necessary to do so in order to carry out and justify yourself in acting up to the principle you have accepted. *Bushnell.*

In the progress of a soul there comes a point where arguments and evidences both external and internal have, for the time, no more force of a progressive kind. They make certain things clear, produce certain convictions, and then await the touch of new vitalities, which come only of personal communications. The needed Gospel is no longer—*certain things are true—but—the Lord lives, and I may come to Him!* and tell Him of all my doubts, and of my half-beliefs, and of all my flickering fears, and of all my cleaving sins, and of all my rising hopes and unquenchable aspirations. Reverently, then, yet urgently, press into His very presence and find some way to lay upon His heart your life's unanswered questions. And in no long time the answer will be so complete and so satisfying as to settle and extinguish the question forever in your heart, and to take up in its stead this clear, joyful testimony of your faith and love: "Lord, to whom shall I go but unto Thee, for Thou hast the words of eternal life?" *A. Raleigh.*

**19-21** is an interesting summary of the life and character of Nebuchadnezzar by one who knew him and appreciated him. Words could not have described more graphically than is done in verse 19 the mightiness of the great king of Babylon and the power he was allowed to have possessed. *B. C.*

The language which describes the sin of Nebuchadnezzar is specially forcible. "When his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride," etc. The terrible influence of power in the hands of depraved men, reacting on the heart, has rarely been portrayed more justly. The perpetual incense of flattery, coupled with the daily experience of being dependent on no one and of having every one dependent on himself, tempts an absolute monarch to feel himself almost a god. Under such influences the moral sensibilities become fearfully hardened

against all sense of obligation whether to God or to man. When any man has reached this moral state, what can remain for him but a fall? *H. C.*

**22-24.** *From whom, and wherefore, the writing was sent.* It was from the God of heaven, who had so often and so marvellously interposed with the proof of His Deity during the reign of the great Nebuchadnezzar. The aged prophet reminded the youthful king of the deposition of his grandfather and of his humiliation among beasts, because of his pride and contempt of the true God who had given him power and honor. He reminded him of Nebuchadnezzar's humble acknowledgment of the true God, and of his consequent restoration to reason and return to his throne. Then the prophet sharply charges Belshazzar with the repetition of the sin of his grandfather. Though he knew what the God of heaven had done to the great monarch and how that monarch had recognized Jehovah, he, Belshazzar, had dared to lift up himself in his inexperience and pride against the Lord of heaven. He had dared to desecrate the vessels of His house by praising in them the gods which see not, nor hear, nor know. Thus he had defied in his folly the God in whose disposal was his throne and his life. *B.*

**23.** Grand old words have taught us long ago "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Yes, he who lives for God has taken that for his aim which all his nature and all his relations prescribe, he is doing what he was made and meant to do; and however incomplete may be its attainments, the lowest form of a God-fearing, God-obeying life is higher and more nearly "perfect" than the fairest career or character against which, as a blight on all its beauty, the damning accusation may be brought, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." *A. M.*

The clause, "whose are all thy ways," follows in the same line of thought with the preceding, "in whose hand thy breath is," and affirms that all his goings, all that made up his life and destiny, were dependent on God—a truth which this king had most wickedly ignored. *H. C.*

**25-28.** *The writing upon the wall.* The words are in the ancient Hebrew characters. The inability of the Chaldean scholars to understand them may have arisen from the difference between the two forms, the Hebrew and Chaldean. If they could understand the letters, they could not apprehend their designed mean-

ing. This perhaps was the point of their difficulty. The first word, *MENE*, twice recorded to give greater intensity and effect to the announcement, contained in it a Divine declaration that the days of the Babylonian kingdom were now *numbered and ended*. *TEKEL*, the second word, meaning *weighed and found light*, referred by Daniel to Belshazzar himself, but including the Babylonian people of whom he was the representative, intimated God's reason for the doom of king and kingdom, which was that night to be enacted. The last word, *UPHARSIN*, the plural form of *PERES* in verse 28, with letter *U* (signifying *and*), is interpreted by Daniel to signify that the Babylonian empire is now broken, and its dominion given to the Medes and Persians. B.

26. The determinate number of years which God hath appointed for the continuance of thy reign, and the Babylonish monarchy, is finished. So God is said to number the months of man's life, and to appoint him "bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14 : 5). The word "*Mene*" is doubled in the foregoing verse, to show that the thing is certain, and "established by God," as Joseph tells Pharaoh in the like case (Gen. 41 : 32). W. Louth.

27. "*Tekel*" signifies to weigh. The meaning is that the Almighty had weighed, or made a due estimate of the conduct of Belshazzar, according to the just and impartial measures of his providence; and had found him light or deficient, a man unworthy of a kingdom and a fit object of Divine vengeance. Wattle.

The "kingdom divided and given to the Medes and Persians" predicted one of the great historic facts of the age—the fall of Babylon and the subversion of the Chaldean dynasty. It fell before Cyrus, at the head of the combined armies of the Medes and Persians. Herodotus and Xenophon, the great Greek historians of their time, have left detailed accounts of this transaction. Cyrus invested the city, turned the current of the Euphrates, and marched his army into the city by way of the river channel. Jeremiah had foretold this event with extraordinary minuteness (chaps. 50 and 51), giving, among many other things, the names of their conquerors: "Prepare against her the nations, the kings of the Medes" (chap. 51 : 28); the drying up of her waters (51 : 36); and the drunken condition of her princes at the time (chap. 51 : 39, 57). "In their heat I will make their feasts and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice and sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, saith the Lord." II. C.

29-31. *The promotion of Daniel, the slaying*

*of Belshazzar, and the destruction of the Babylonish monarchy.* It was under circumstances of awful significance that the royal pledge was fulfilled, richly to enrobe the aged prophet and to proclaim him third ruler in the kingdom (next to Belshazzar and the absent Nabonadius). And it was but for a brief period that his honors were worn and his power possessed. Perhaps God's purpose in Daniel's exaltation at the last was the more effectively to commend this foreigner and Jew, manifestly favored of God, to the incoming ruler of the Median kingdom. This result, we know, was certainly attained.

30. On that night the Chaldeo-Assyrio-Babylonian empire—in which first the Chaldeans, then the Assyrians, and finally the Chaldeans again, had possessed the dominion, but which was, in reality, all one empire—after a continuance of nearly two thousand years fell to rise no more. B.

The interval of nearly fifteen years before the final conflict with Babylon was probably occupied by Cyrus in finishing the conquest of the tribes of Asia Minor, strengthening his power in Media, and subduing the more distant portion of the Babylonian empire in Upper Assyria. Nabonedus seems to have remained on the defensive, completing the great works around Babylon. At length Cyrus marched from Ecbatana, and crossed the river Gyndes by a diversion of its channel, which must have prepared his engineers for their greater operation of the same kind on the Euphrates. Nabonedus tried the fate of one battle, and, on his defeat, retired to Borsippa (Birs Nimrûd), "the Chaldean Benares, the city in which the Chaldeans had their most revered objects of religion, and where they cultivated their science." Here he surrendered after the capture of Babylon. Cyrus spared his life, and gave him a principality in Carmania, where he died.

Meanwhile the people of Babylon remained in fancied security behind their immense fortifications. The city formed a vast square, divided diagonally and almost equally by the Euphrates. Each side of the square was about fourteen miles long. The double walls are said to have been about three hundred feet high and eighty-five feet broad; dimensions which cease to be incredible when we remember that they were vast mounds of earth and brickwork, the remains of which, and others like them, are still traced by travellers. These walls were strengthened by two hundred and fifty towers, and pierced with a hundred gateways, the lintels and side posts, as well as the gates them-

selves, being of brass. The river was enclosed on both banks by the quays, which were like wise protected by walls and brass gates. These walls and gates are particularly referred to in that striking prophecy of Jeremiah, which is almost a history of the siege (50 : 15 ; 51 : 53, 58). The vast area of two hundred square miles, interspersed, as is usual in Eastern cities, with large open spaces, gave opportunities for growing corn, in addition to the immense supplies of food which had been laid up for a siege of many years. The two banks of the river were connected by a stone bridge about a thousand yards in length, at each end of which stood a royal palace. The chief was that on the east, a fortress in itself, surrounded by triple walls, of which the outer had a circuit of seven miles, the middle of four and a half, and the latter of two and a half miles ; the middle wall was three hundred feet high, and its towers four hundred and twenty feet, and the inner one was higher still. Such statements may diminish our surprise at the security in which the inhabitants of the city and palace lived under their reckless young prince, Belshazzar. P. S.

*Taking of the City.* The Euphrates flowed through the midst of Babylon, and its banks were lined with walls pierced with many gates which afforded access to the city. The river then, as at present, overflowed all its banks in the early spring—not so much from rain, as from the melting of the snows in the regions which it traverses in its upper course. The inundation is then, in some seasons, so redundant as to prove very injurious to the buildings near the river. To avert such consequences, advantage had been taken of a spacious natural depression of the soil at some distance above Babylon, which had been artificially deepened in part, so as to form a vast reservoir, into which the waters of the river could on occasion be turned, by means of a broad canal, so as for a time almost to exhaust the stream. This great basin, which in its ordinary aspect was a morass, then became a large lake, not less, it is said, than fifty miles in circuit. Now, on this important night, Cyrus sent up a strong detachment to the head of the canal leading to this lake, with orders at a given time to break down the great bank or dam that was between the lake and the canal, and so turn the whole current of the river into the lake. At the same time, he stationed one body of troops at the point where the river entered the city, and another where it came out, ordering them to march in by the exhausted

channel as soon as they should find it fordable. Toward the evening he also opened the head of the trenches on both sides of the river above the city, that the water might discharge itself into them, by which means and the breaking down of the great dam the waters in this part of the river were soon exhausted. The two bodies of troops then, according to the orders they had received, marched into the bed of the river, the water reaching no higher than their knees. The gates toward the river, from which quarter no one suspected danger, had been left open amid the riot and disorder of that night, so that the Persians were enabled to penetrate, without opposition, to the very heart of the city. The two parties met, according to agreement, at the palace, where they surprised the guards and cut them in pieces. Those who were in the palace opening the gates to learn the cause of this confusion, so unsuited to the festive night, the Persians rushed in, took the palace, and slew the king, who came out to meet them sword in hand.

Cyrus then sent bodies of horse through the city, to clear the streets and to proclaim to the inhabitants that they were to keep within doors on pain of death. The next day those who held the forts, perceiving that the city was in fact taken and that the king was dead, gave up the strongholds, of which Cyrus immediately took possession, and garrisoned them with his own troops. It was then proclaimed by the heralds throughout the city that all the inhabitants who possessed arms were to bring them forth and deliver them up, and that the inhabitants of any house in which arms were afterward found should be put to death. The order was obeyed. And thus the great city, so strongly fortified, so rich, so populous, and so abundantly provisioned, fell, almost without a blow, into the hands of the Persians. It will be seen that there were many special and singular incidents in this siege. It is one of the description of which no vague generalities could be applicable. It is, therefore, well calculated to strengthen any wavering faith in the glorious prophecies of the Old Testament—to point out how exactly the most minute and remarkable incidents of this transaction were foretold, long before their occurrence, by more than one prophet of the Lord, *Kitto*.

Cyrus waited for some great festival when the attention of the Babylonian soldiers and citizens should be diverted from the works of his sappers. On the occasion of the "feast" described in this chapter, everything happened as the conqueror expected. Belshazzar forgot

his enemies or left the care of them to others. He gave himself to the excesses of the banquet at which his "thousand lords" were gathered. The people imitated their betters: feasting and dancing, drunken riot and boastful security took possession of all. The very sentries forgot their duties and neglected to close the water-gates. "In that night" the dikes were rent, the canals carried off the water, and the Medes and Persians passed up to the river walls. Without a struggle Babylon fell into the hands of her enemies. In the massacre which followed, "Belshazzar was slain," death following speedily on that news which runners brought: "show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, that the passages are stopped, the reeds burned with fire, and the men of war affrighted" (Jer. 51: 31, 32).

Cyrus pressed on to Borsippa, but Nabonadius, broken-hearted and sensible of the folly of resistance, surrendered at once. The conqueror was merciful, and not only spared his life, but made him governor of Carmania. He extended his mercy to the city he had lately gained. It was not his policy to expose to any invader what could be easily kept as a support of his own power. He therefore contented himself with ordering the dismantling of parts of the wall. It was a more important point to determine whom he should set over it as a governor. He chose "Darius the Mede," a man of about "threescore and two years old."

#### *Darius the Mede.*

The scriptural description of this prince is brief, but very distinct. He was the son of Ahasuerus, and of the seed of the Medes. He succeeded Belshazzar at the age of sixty-two years (5: 31; 9: 1; 11: 1). If, as is most natural, that succession was immediate, a Babylonian was replaced by a Median dynasty. And this fact is attested by Josephus (Antiq. x. § 11. 4) and Xenophon (Cyrop. i. § 5. 2). According to these historians, Cyrus conquered Babylon for his father-in-law, Cyaxares II., the son of Astyages, and did not come to the throne of Babylon as an independent prince till after his death. Josephus mentions that Darius was known to the Greeks by another name; and this, it has been concluded, was "Cyaxares," the name given to him by Xenophon. This identification is apparently supported by the indication in Daniel (5: 31; 6: 28), that first of all a Median and then a Persian dynasty succeeded the Babylonian. And it agrees with the age attributed to Darius by the prophet. From Xenophon it appears that he was an old

man at the time of the capture of the city, too old to have an heir. When he gave his daughter in marriage to Cyrus, and with her Media as a dowry, he observed that he had no son born in marriage.

But, on the other hand, it is remarkable that Herodotus (i. 130), Ctesias, and Isaiah (44, 45) know nothing of a *second* Cyaxares between Astyages and Cyrus. In the tradition followed by Herodotus, who adds parenthetically that he was acquainted with two other versions of the story, the Persian tribes are represented as subject to the Medes, till Cyrus, a bold Achaemenian adventurer, threw off the yoke, and deposed the Median king, Astyages, his grandfather on his mother's side. Astyages died childless, and with him ended the Median dynasty. Cyrus is, therefore, according to Herodotus, the sole and unassisted conqueror of Babylon, and the first king of the Medo-Persian dynasty. An appeal in support of this view is generally made to the opening verse of the apocryphal writing "Bel and the Dragon": "After the death of King Astyages the kingdom came to Cyrus the Persian."

These contradictions, real or apparent, have tested the ingenuity and scholarship of critics as fully as the sister question concerning Belshazzar. The literature of the whole subject is so immense that, as before, those views which are now either entirely surrendered or but feebly supported must be passed over with a mere allusion. In addition to the identification with Cyaxares II., Darius the Mede has been supposed the same as Neriglissar, Darius son of Hystaspes, Nabonadius, Astyages, or some Median prince otherwise almost unknown to history. Of all these identifications, the first and the last two alone retain any hold upon modern opinion. There is manliness as well as wisdom in the opinion of Quatremère and Rawlinson, that Darius the Mede is a historic character of whose existence no other record has as yet been found except that contained in Scripture.

Let it be remembered that the prophet Daniel was not writing a chronicle of his times; that he passes from the reign of one king to another without mentioning intermediate events; and that of those reigns he selects only facts here and there; and there will no longer be an outcry against this or that omission. A juster spirit will refuse to brand with fraud a writer who makes no claim to the consecutiveness and precision of a professed historian. Had this chapter proceeded from a Maccabean forger, he would not have left its concluding verses in

their present terse and condensed form. Posterity would have received the record with every obscure allusion removed, every blank filled up, even if the aim of the romancer had been of an essentially parabolic character. B. C.

#### *Practical Points.*

Conscience makes cowards of the guilty when the occasion for fear comes. There is a period when mercy gives way to doom. The issue is invisible to man, but its record, entered in the Unseen Book, is *Mene, tekél*.

The balances of God are constantly applied to test every life. The weights appointed for these balances are truth, trust, worship, obedience, and love toward God, with unselfish helpfulness to men. If the life matches these, it is well. If it is too light, if its character, motives, and acts do not fairly balance with these—in a word, if these fruits of godly living are not found in the life, then the man is weighed and found wanting.

*Evil (or sin) pursueth sinners. Be sure your sin will find you out.* It is *his own sin* that makes sure of the sinner's discovery, arrest and punishment; his own sin is the cause, the means, and the instrument of his ultimate doom. Both the Word and the providence of God abundantly attest, as they solemnly impress, this fearful fact of man's *self-condemnation*. B.

Do not similar warnings to those given to Belshazzar come to every sinner long before the warning of his doom? If any of you are living a life of sin, have they not come to you? Have there been no dreams in the darkness? no voices in the silence? no hauntings of fear? no burdens of remorse? no memories of inno-

cence? no aches of shame? no qualms of sickness? no echoing, as of ghostly footfalls in the far-off corridors of life? These reminders from God of truths which we have forgotten come sometimes very terribly; not whispered, but shouted—not shouted only, but cut deep—not only cut deep before the eyes, but branded in letters of fire upon the soul. When palsyng sickness is the debt due from weakened manhood to sinful youth; when the loss of the last chance brings home to us the sense of the squandered opportunity; when the cold light of heaven, bursting through the drawn curtains of the hypocrite, shows him to himself and to others, not as he wished to be thought, but as he is; above all, when sin has been punished by God's suffering us to fall into deeper and deadlier sin, and crime flings its glare of illumination on the self-deception which said of sin, "There is no harm in it"—then it is that God puts forth the fingers of a man's hand, and His inscription, once unheeded, flashes into letters of fire. And—since be sure your sins will find you out—so must it be, sooner or later, to every sinner to whom repentance calls in vain. So that what I urge on you is to read those milder warnings, to listen to those stiller, smaller voices, which come to us, not at some terrible crisis, but at quiet moments, and ere we sleep at night, and on our knees, and when we read our Bibles, and in every blessed means of grace. For indeed those words, written once in the palace of Belshazzar, are for us written forever in the house of life; and each one of you, in your own hearts, may still read the *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, as they were left by the awful moving of the spectral hand. *Farrar.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTER VI.

**6:1** IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty satraps, which 2 should be throughout the whole kingdom; and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one; that these satraps might give account unto them, and that the king should have 3 no damage. Then this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole 4 realm. Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find occasion against Daniel as touching the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faith- 5 ful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of 6 his God. Then these presidents and satraps assembled together to the king, and said thus



7 unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the deputies and the satraps, the counsellors and the governors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a strong interdict, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the interdict, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the interdict. And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem ;) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's interdict ; Last thou not signed an interdict, that every man that shall make petition unto any god or man within thirty days, save unto thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions ? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him ; and he laboured till the going down of the sun to rescue him. Then these men assembled together unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians, that no interdict nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den ; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords ; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting ; neither were instruments of music brought before him ; and his sleep fled from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice : the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions ? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me : forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me ; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives ; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den. Then king Darius wrote unto all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth ; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in all the dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel : for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end : he delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth ; who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

**Chap. 6.** This chapter treats of the administration of Darius. Daniel is promoted to the highest position next to the king ; the other presidents and all the princes, through envy, plot his destruction by procuring a law making it a capital crime to offer any petition to any god or man, save unto the king, for thirty days : Daniel continues to pray as aforetime ; is therefore cast into the lions' den, but comes forth unharmed ; whereupon the king by pub-

lic decree calls on all men to fear the God of Daniel, II. C.

This familiar incident is the more impressive if we remember that Daniel was now far advanced in years. He had now attained, perhaps exceeded, the age of eighty-five. Under Nebuchadnezzar he had fulfilled the Divine order (New Testament) to "fear God and honor the king." And he had been honored for his long and wise and faithful service. From a

seclusion of a considerable period, he had been brought, at Belshazzar's summons, and by him elevated for a brief honor to the station next his own. Here he was found by Darius, who by appointment of Cyrus succeeded to the rule of the Babylonish kingdom, now a mere appendage to the Persian Empire. B.

Daniel might now indulge his solemn meditations over the memories and the tombs of departed monarchs, whom he had beheld in all the plenitude of imperial splendor and pride. They were now but dust and a name; left among the memorials of an empire also departed. But *his* great Master still lived! unchangeable in glory and goodness; and he remained unchangeably devoted to Him, all the same, whatever became of mortal potentates and empires. He wanted no patron; the smiles or frowns of monarchs were indifferent to him. He was in favor with the Highest Power—inasmuch that he had been addressed by an angelic messenger with the unequalled appellation, "*O man greatly beloved!*" To a man who had heard *that*, think how any title of worldly dignity, of mortal favor would have sounded! *John Foster.*

Apprised of the great worth and services of Daniel, Darius (also an old man) set him in the very highest station. He appointed him *first* of three *presidents*, to whom the governors of the one hundred and twenty districts of the kingdom were directly accountable. Because a Jew, Daniel could be trusted by the monarch. But his foreign origin not only alienated from him his associates in office, but, connected with his superior wisdom and excellence, drew upon him their jealousy and hate. Nothing evil or corrupt, neither error nor fault, nor flaw in his loyalty to Darius, could they find upon which to base an accusation against him. So they cunningly arranged to base it upon his very excellence; to entangle him through his piety, his beautiful life habit of daily communion with his God. They did not dare to "speak evil" of his "good," but they dared attempt to make his devotions the means of his destruction. B.

**1, 2.** The kingdom as here spoken of is Babylonia proper, and not the whole of that vast realm, embracing several distinct nationalities, which was brought under the sway of Nebuchadnezzar. Darius himself was a sort of deputy or viceroy under Cyrus, and Babylonia was virtually a province in the great Medo-Persian Empire. These verses show how the executive department of the government was organized.

**3.** Daniel was pre-eminent, not only in wisdom and executive ability, but in his disinterested devotion to the public weal. While the other high officers were selfish and corrupt men (as is usual), the king could not but see that Daniel was thoroughly a good man, devoted to the welfare of his country, and unselfishly true to the interests of his king. Hence the king put him above all his other officers, and had even thought to intrust the whole executive management of the kingdom in his hands—*i.e.*, by making him sole president instead of being simply the head man of the three.

**4.** Such a model of excellence, so far surpassing and so uncomfortably eclipsing themselves, was keenly cutting to those corrupt officers, and aroused their bitterest hostility. So they sought to find some fault in his official life, but they sought there in vain. He was both wise and faithful, and hence left them no ground of accusation there. H. C.

In the narrative of Daniel's being committed to the den of lions one trait comes out quite incidentally, which was one of his grandest characteristics. His enemies could calculate on the certainty of the prophet's maintaining his fidelity to duty under any circumstances, and irrespective of any consequences whatsoever. There is nothing finer than this in the whole history. Could we have more emphatic testimony to the exalted piety of Daniel? It was resolved to ruin him. A certain method was deliberately adopted. One important element in the calculation was that the intended victim would do the same faithful thing, though it seemed to lead straight into the abyss. Daniel did not belie the calculation. *Pusey.*

It is of the highest moment that *we walk consistently*. The men of the world will do many things which they would condemn, and very properly, too, in us. They expect us to walk by a higher rule, because we profess to do so. If you would not inflame their prejudices, you must remember your high calling. If you *do so*, they will say of you, as was said of Daniel, they "*could find no matter against him, except in the law of his God.*" *R. Hull*

**5.** Abandoning all hope of finding any occasion even for slander against Daniel in the line of his official conduct, they set themselves to make an occasion in the line of his religion. This is avowedly their only hope. They know he is not an idolater, but is a conscientious worshipper of the true God. They know him to be a praying man.

**6-9.** They shaped this proposed law to take with the king by a bait for his vanity, and to entrap Daniel through his known decision and firmness in the worship of his God. It was the best compliment they could pay to Daniel that they assumed so confidently that he would pray to God none the less for this monstrous law. H. C.

Their scheme was a simple one; an open easy snare to the vanity of an Oriental monarch, because one which harmonized with the received notions of a despotic rule. It was a not unfamiliar adulation of royalty which they proposed. An exclusive worship of the king for thirty days; during that period no petition should be presented to any being, Divine or human, save the king. B.

**10.** Daniel saw in an instant that this law was planned for his destruction, yet without one moment's debate with his love of life or fear of lions, he said, I shall pray to God none the less but all the more for that, and none the less openly. With the God whom I serve I leave the whole question of my living or dying. I know it is my duty and my right to pray. I cannot know that it is my duty to live. If the Lord sees fit to protect my life, He can readily do so. I bear my case to Him, and leave it in His hand. With his heart thus full of firmness, prayer and trust, he hastened home to his house and to his accustomed chamber of prayer, and there, his window open, not closed, as if he would conceal his devotions, but open and toward Jerusalem as the place of God's visible glory and the locality of His earthly mercy-seat, he kneeled and prayed as aforesaid. H. C.

"He knew that the writing was signed," and he knew, too, that it was aimed at him, and that it was a compound of malignity and absurdity; but he uttered no reproach, and made no remonstrance, either *with* his persecutors for their injustice, or *against* them in any appeal to the misguided sovereign. It is a great attainment in Christian excellence to be able to maintain silence amid extreme provocation, and to hold on our way in firm and dignified adherence to the truth amid the machinations or insults of the world. "He went into his house"—and for what purpose? Not to indulge in bitter lamentations over his hard lot, or secret repinings at the conduct of Providence, but to *pray*. This was his habit "three times a day," and he continued the practice as before. F. A. Cor.

All prying vigilance was superfluous; for he, "as aforesaid," and with his windows un-

closed, uncurtained, "*prayed and gave thanks before his God three times a day.*" A striking admonition against subterfuges in duty and religion; against contrivances at once to quiet conscience and preserve an immediate self-interest. Especially in every trial of religious integrity which is to be conspicuously public, under the observant attention of men to seem to forego a principle is to do it in fact. *Foster.*

How clear the conscience, how holy the soul, how steadfast the faith, how lively the hope, how fervent the charity, how invincible the courage of Daniel must have been, who, in such circumstances, could calmly and composedly go on in the regular and exact performance of his devotions! *Bp. Horne.*—He prayed kneeling, as he had always done. He prayed aloud, as had been his wont, three times a day. Not so much as by the lowering of his voice or the closing of a shutter would he seem to fear man more than God. *Phelps.*—Confronted by the immovable law of the Medes and Persians that only the king should be prayed to for such a time, he simply keeps on in his *habit of devotion* to Jehovah. Aforetime he had served God. Now, held in the habit of righteousness, he would continue to do so. It is the best boon and blessing for a man that he be able to avail himself of this law and momentum of holy habit. *W. Lloyd.*

**Three times a day.** It is very true that mere rounds of observance in religion, however faithfully kept, have in themselves no value, nothing of the substance of piety; but they have an immense value when kept and meant to be as the means of piety. It is equally true that nothing is acceptable to God which is not an offering of the heart. But it does not follow that we are therefore to wait, doing nothing till the inclinations or impulses of the heart are ready. Thus, when the disciple says, "Why should I attempt to pray? what is my prayer but mockery, when I go to it by fixed times without or against inclination?" he overlooks entirely what belongs to the very economy of prayer, and constitutes its highest practical value—viz., that not being an exercise to merely play out impulse and inclination, it is an exercise to *kindle* impulse and *beget* inclination. This, in fact, is the very particular blessing of it, that when we are averted from it and slackened in all our inclinations toward it, we may still get our fire kindled by it. When we go to it, therefore, by fixed times of observance, we do just what is necessary to beget fixed inclinations and train the soul into a habit of abiding impulse. Otherwise, or desisting

because we have no inclination, we consent to have no inclination, but that which wavers fitfully, and probably, at last, no inclination at all. The whole argument turns here just as it does in other matters. There is no genuine prayer, for example, that is not offered in the Spirit, and yet God promises the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Shall we then decline to ask because we have not the Spirit already, and because such kind of asking will be only mockery! No! for the very design of God is to meet us *in* the asking, and to enter His Spirit into the asking itself. He puts us to the asking for the purpose of getting us open to the Spirit, and accessible to His holy inspirations. We go to obtain inspirations, inclinations, gales of impulse, and not simply to exercise such as we have already. Nothing in this view is weaker, more unpractical, closer to a shallow dissipation, more certain to end in a dreadful collapse in character than this most treacherous doctrine, which makes it even a law that we surrender everything to our inclinations. *Boswell*.

In spiritual as in secular things the deepest and strongest characters need much solitude to form them. Thoughtfulness, self-knowledge, self-control, a chastened wisdom and piety, are the fruit of habitual meditation and prayer. In these exercises heaven is brought near, and our exaggerated estimate of earthly things corrected. By these our spiritual energies, shattered and worn by the friction of worldly work, are repaired. In the recurring seasons of devotion the cares and anxieties of worldly business cease to vex us; exhausted with its toils we have, in daily communion with God, "meat to eat which the world knoweth not of." *Caird*.

Daniel's piety consisted not so much in his belief in God, as in his constant intimacy with Him. He was a man whose integrity was beyond question—so the earlier verses of the chapter intimate; but quite beside this, God stood near to him, and was a very real and personal thing to him. He confided in God; he talked over with God his wants and distresses. He did not *say* his prayers. Prayer meant with him coming within speaking distance of God and getting into social relation with Him. He told God the secrets of his heart, and in consequence God told him His. When we let God into our confidence He lets us into His. And so all the way through the last half of this book we have nothing but a record of the way in which God made Daniel His confidant. The last six chapters of it are only a series of the

secrets that God told Daniel—revelations, visions, we call them—but that is only another name for secrets, and means that now and then God makes a man His confidant, and trusts His secrets to the man, because the man first trusted his to Him. C. H. P.

It is possible to keep up unbroken communion with God amid the roar of the busy street, as in the inmost corner of His secret place. The communion which expresses itself in the continual reference of all common actions to His will, and is fed by constant realizing of His help, and by lowly dependence on Him for strength to do the prosaic tasks of business or statesmanship, is as real as that which gazes in absorbed contemplation on His beauty. True, the former will never be realized unless there is much of the latter. Martha soon gets worried, and forgets the Master, even while she is making ready for His reception, unless she comes and sits at His feet with Mary. But, on the other hand, gazing, without work, is apt to degenerate, too, as many a mystical dreamer has found to his cost. There is more communion with God in a Christian man's counting house than in many a convent; and the noblest field for religion is the field of common life. It "should control," says Law, "small common things, both duties and troubles; for these do really make up life; and if these be not the sphere of religion, what sphere has it?" A. M.

**11-13.** These men assembled, all intensely eager to see if their scheme was working well, and moreover apparently aware of his accustomed hours of devotion. They find him praying; and now they feel sure of his ruin. They hasten to the king, and artfully begin with referring to the decree, the standing law of the realm, for these thirty days. When the king had recognized it, they bring out the fact that Daniel has broken it, putting this in the most offensive light possible even for slander; "regardeth not thee, nor the decree which thou hast signed." That same Daniel whom thou hast promoted so excessively and so unwisely, has no proper regard for thee, O king! He prays to others as much as he pleases, despite of thine own law. H. C.

**14, 15.** *The king's fruitless endeavor to deliver Daniel.* Too late for remedy, and with sore self-reproach, Darius sought to undo his hasty action. He had not foreseen the issue, as involving the very life of Daniel. Darius, too, was an old man, irresolute and weak. He needed just the stay of such a pure, wise, strong character as even the more aged prophet

had already proved himself to possess. No wonder that "he labored" through the day on which the accusation was brought "till the going down of the sun to deliver Daniel." Of the particular efforts he put forth we are not told; nor does it seem that any reasonable conjecture can be formed. Upon this and every similar matter merely curious, the time and ingenuity that may be expended will scarcely find adequate return. The king's *persistence* is the only point of interest here. This was honorable to his heart, and showed, as did all the after incidents, the strength of his respect and attachment for Daniel, and the force of Daniel's exemplary piety. Punctually at sunset, when the day was finished, came the accusers, and pressed upon the king the necessity of executing his decree against Daniel. B.

**14.** The king is chagrined that he allowed himself to be caught in this snare. Now for the first time he sees the envious and mean spirit of his officers in obtaining from him that decree, and bites his lips in shame that he could have been so beguiled and entrapped. He labored to save Daniel till the going down of the sun. No doubt he heartily esteemed Daniel and probably loved him, and felt, therefore, the bitterest grief and shame that he should be made unwittingly the author of his destruction. But all his efforts are unavailing. H. C.

**15.** Law of the Medes and Persians. In this two principles are involved: one, the existence of a settled law or rule by which the king himself, theoretically at any rate, is bound, and which he cannot alter; the other, the inclusion under this law or rule of the irrevocability of a royal decree or promise. Both of these principles are recognized as Medo-Persic by profane writers. It was applied to Cambyses, one of the most despotic of the Persian monarchs (Herodotus, iii., 31), and Xerxes, son of Darius Hystaspes (Herodotus, i., 109-111). *Rendlinson.*

**16, 17.** *Daniel cast into the den of lions.* The king was constrained to issue the command that Daniel be cast into the lions' den. The law of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians making every statute of the monarch irreversible, was an ancient one, long antedating the union of the two nations. This law Darius could not disregard in Daniel's case. It was probably the first test case under the newly established government of Babylon. It was specially important therefore that the principle should now be carried out. The king's strong interest in Daniel, too, was manifest to all. Any interposition now would be justly

charged as a breach of law by the king, through personal partiality toward the offender. But while he issued the command, he touchingly expresses to Daniel the hope, if not the conviction, that his God whom he had served so faithfully would deliver him. Darius evidently recognizes Daniel's refusal to proceed from a principled obedience to his own God, and not from any feeling of disloyalty. Once and again, in the same touching words, he bears testimony to Daniel's consistent, habitual fidelity to Jehovah.

From the unchangeableness of Oriental customs, we infer that the lions' den was a large underground excavation. In the modern den, the whole is under the open sky, only surrounded with a wall. The statement here implies that the den was covered; with a single opening at the top, which could be closed by a large stone. Into such a den Daniel was cast, and upon its mouth a stone was laid. They "made sure" of the sacrifice of their victim, by doubly sealing the stone with the signet of the king and that of his lords, impressed upon moist clay. The lions' den seemed about to prove the prophet's sepulchre. B.

**16.** That parting word witnessed to the impression made by the life-long consistency of Daniel. He must be a good man who gets such a testimony from those who are harming him. The busy minister of state had done his political work so as to extort that tribute from one who had no sympathy with his religion. Do we do ours in that fashion? How many of our statesmen on either side of the Atlantic "serve God continually" and obviously in their public life? A. M.

**The den of lions.** Lions, which though all but extinct in India, and absolutely so in other parts of Asia, are still common in Babylonia and Persia, were kept in the parks of great princes as part of their estate. The same custom still continues among the native rulers of India, and is alluded to in the Assyrian monuments. The dens in which wild beasts are confined are not cavernous, or vaults, like those in which the Romans kept the wild beasts in readiness for the cruelties of the amphitheatre. They are simply pits open to the sky, but enclosed with high walls. The Babylonian den might be like these, or it might be a cave with an enclosure round it. A great stone is still an ordinary mode of securing a doorway in the East, as we know it was for closing tombs. If the access to the lions' den was arranged like that of a sepulchre, a bar would be fixed across the front of the stone, fastened to

either side of the doorway by thongs, the knotting of which was sealed with wax stamped by a signet. Many of these signets and seals have been found; and it is interesting to note that the favorite device on the seals of the Babylonian and Persian kings is one in which the king is represented as slaying a lion. There are several specimens extant of a double sealing, like that here of the signet both of the king and of his lords. *Tristram.*

Daniel had now the same kind of opportunity of showing his fidelity to God as his three Hebrew companions before. The lions were not less terrible than the *fiery furnace*. *A stone was brought.* All this *precaution* served the purposes of the Divine Providence. There could be no trick nor collusion here; if Daniel be preserved, it must be by the power of the Supreme God. The same precaution was taken by the Jews, in the case of the *burial of our blessed Lord*; and this very thing has served as one of the strongest proofs of the certainty of His resurrection and their unmixed wickedness. A. C.

The entrance was sealed with two seals, one the king's, one the conspirators', that neither party might steal a march on the other. So, down in the dark there, with the glittering eyeballs of the brutes round him, and their growls in his ears, the old man sits all night long, with peace in his heart, and looking up trustfully, through the hole in the den, to his Protector's stars shining their silent message of cheer. A. M.

**18-23.** *The king's restless night, and early morning visit to the den.* The usual evening banquet, and its accompanying entertainment for diversion and soothing by which rest was invited, were set aside. So intense was his anxiety in behalf of the imperilled prophet, that he could not sleep. This shows how strong was Daniel's hold upon the king's sympathy and regard; and perhaps, that his conscience had been stirred the more deeply by a conscious sense of injustice done to the prophet. With the dawn he rose from his sleepless couch, and hastened to know the result to Daniel.

There is a blending of hope with doubt in his saddened tone of inquiry. His question itself is sublimely instructive as well as touching. It shows that the single thought, expressed when Daniel was about to be immured in the den, has been upon his mind all the night. The unwavering truth and fidelity of Daniel to his God, this is the thought. "Hast thou God," is his question. "Hast He to whom thou hast been so true, indeed proved mighty to deliver thee?" Then instantly from the gloom of the den came the prophet's response. With

the same respectful salutation as if he stood on the palace floor, and with a calm, clear tone of assured faith he speaks. His God had proved able to deliver him. Fierce and famished though the lions were (as we know from their after instant destruction of the wicked accusers), God had restrained them from hurting His faithful servant. And the reason for deliverance he asserts to be his innocence of *evil in the matter* for which he had been so fearfully endangered. He had been delivered because he had been loyal *in act* to his God and *in heart* to the king.

Thus relief was brought to the king's troubled spirit. Gladness overpowered wonder, as he ordered the release of Daniel from his peril; and the prophet came forth unharmed. The record adds the reason of the miraculous protection. It was the prophet's faith in a faithful God. He believed that God was able to deliver him from the lions. He knew that God would so deliver him, if it consisted with His own perfect purposes. One of the grandest of the worthies of the faith enrolled (though not by name) in the eleventh of Hebrews, Daniel was yet only one of multitudes whose faith has had rich reward. Distinguished as he was above many by a *present* deliverance, he was yet more distinguished in that, through his single testimony of tested and triumphant faith, the *then world of living* men heard of the unknown but living God. B.

**22.** God has preserved his life by a miracle. Darius had called Him Daniel's God (thy God whom thou servest); to which Daniel does, as it were, echo back, Yea, He is my God, whom I own, and who owns me, for He has sent His angel. The same bright and glorious Being that was seen in the form of the Son of God with the three children in the fiery furnace had visited Daniel, and it is likely in a visible appearance had enlightened the dark den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut the lions' mouths that they had not in the least hurt him. The angel's presence made even the lions' den his stronghold, his palace, his paradise; he never had had a better night in his life. See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe His power to restrain the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour, from hurting those that are His. See the care God takes of His faithful worshippers, especially when He calls them out to suffer for Him. If He keep their souls from sin, comfort their souls with His peace, and receive their souls to Himself, He does in effect stop the lions' mouths, that they cannot hurt them. H.

Simple trust in God brings His angel to our

help, and the deliverance, which is ultimately to be ascribed to His hand muzzling the gaping beasts of prey, may also be ascribed to the faith which sets His hand in motion. The true cause is God, but the indispensable condition without which God will not act, and with which He cannot but act, is our trust. Therefore all the great things which it is said to do are due, not to anything in it, but wholly to that of which it lays hold. A foot or two of lead pipe is worth little; but if it is the channel through which water supplies a city, it is priceless. Faith may or not bring external deliverances, such as it brought to Daniel; but the good cheer which the lesson teaches us does not depend on these. When Paul lay in Rome, shortly before his martyrdom, this story of Daniel was in his mind, as he thankfully wrote to Timothy, "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." He adds a hope which contrasts strangely, at first sight, with the clear expectation of a speedy and violent death, expressed a moment or two before ("I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come") when he says, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work;" but he had learned that it was possible to pass through the evil and yet to be delivered from it, and that a man might be thrown to the lions and devoured by them, and yet be truly shielded from all harm by them. So he adds, "and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom," thereby teaching us that the true deliverance is that which carries us into, or something nearer toward the eternal home. Thus understood, the miracle of Daniel's deliverance is continually repeated to all who partake of Daniel's faith, "Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation, . . . thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder." A. M.

The prophet, having justly offended neither God nor the king, very truly offers the righteousness of his cause as the reason of the Divine interference for his security; not from any ostentatious display of his own merit, but to direct the attention of the king to the power and providence of that great Being who is "mighty to save," and whose favor is more to be regarded than life itself. *Windle.*—*Before thee, O King, have I done no hurt.* Though I disobeyed thy decree, it was not done out of contumacy or stubbornness, but purely to preserve a good conscience, which is the only true principle of loyalty and obedience. (See Rom. 13: 5.) *W. Loeche.*

**23.** The king is relieved and joyous to find that his valued friend is safe and that no seri-

ous consequences have come from his wicked law. The demands of the law having now been met, he orders Daniel brought forth from the den. Not a scratch is on him, and those heathen men know that this comes of his believing in his God. They are witnesses to the saving power of Jehovah, God of Israel.

**24.** The great crime of Daniel's accusers now meets its righteous punishment. They had plotted his death; and though they had sought to effect it by the forms of law, yet their malice and hence their guilt were none the less for this reason. It was right and just that they should be made a public example. H. C.

**25-28.** Following the entire occurrence, Darius issued a decree throughout the realm, that all men should fear and tremble before the God of Daniel. And the prophet was restored to more than his former favor and power. Through the two years of Darius, into the reign of Cyrus, he remained the premier minister and counsellor of the kingdom. B.

**26.** *I make a decree, that men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.* As in the case of the three Hebrews (chap. 3: 29). The true God was known by His servants, and by the deliverances He wrought for them. See His characters in this decree. He is the *living God*; the Author and Giver of life; all others are *dead gods*. He is *steadfast forever*. All things *change*, but He is *unchangeable*. He has a *kingdom*; for as He made all things, so He *governs* all things. His *kingdom shall not be destroyed*. No human power can prevail against it, because it is upheld by His omnipotence. His *dominion is without end*. It is an everlasting dominion, under an everlasting rule, by an everlasting God. He *delivereth* them that are in danger and bondage. He *rescues* those who have fallen into the hands of their enemies, and implore His succor. He *worketh signs in the heavens*, and *wonders upon earth*; showing that both are under His sway, and are parts of His dominion. And to complete all, *He hath delivered Daniel*. Before our own eyes He has given the fullest proof of His *power* and *goodness*, in rescuing His faithful servant from the teeth of the lions. What a fine eulogium on the great God and His faithful servant! A. C.

Edicts to this effect were published by Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus, and Artaxerxes. "Such public and solemn testimonies to the majesty of the God of Israel," observes Dr. Graves, "must have contributed materially to check error and idolatry, in a country where the form of the government rendered the ex-

ample and opinions of the monarch so powerful and operative. They must have gained the Jews, even in their captive and degraded state, much consideration and attention; and as such a state led them to take pride in their religious superiority—the only superiority now left them—and to exalt the Divine original and wisdom of their religion; so those events must have gained their representations weight and credulity." *Wines*.

29. *So this Daniel prospered.* Few courtiers had so long a reign, served so many masters without flattering any, been more successful in their management of public affairs, been so useful to the States where they were in office, or have been more owned of God or left such an example to posterity. A. C.

The verse is a note of time probably added—whether by Daniel himself or not is immaterial—to close the historical section of the book and forming a natural conclusion to the events narrated in the chapter. The reign of "Darius the Mede" was confessedly a short one; it was followed by the reign, so pregnant with glory to his own name and so eventful in the history of God's chosen people—of Cyrus the Great. B. C.

The final verse implies Daniel's restoration to rank, and gives a beautiful, simple picture of the old man's closing days, which had begun so long before, in such a different world, as Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and closed in Cyrus's, enriched with all that should accompany old age—honor, obedience, troops of friends. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." A. M.

#### *Suggested Thoughts.*

Like the Son of Man, of whom he spake in vision, Daniel witnessed a good confession before many observers. In his worship he was open, but not ostentatious. Not like the Pharisee, praying in the streets to be seen of men, yet so ordering his devotion that men might know whom he worshipped, he thus realized Christ's injunction, "Let your light," etc. (Matt. 5: 16).

His regular habit of prayer, the similar habit of David (referred to in the Psalms), suggests a plain, personal inquiry to all who profess a vital union with the same Jehovah. The only possibly better practice than this thrice-a-day worship, is intimated by the injunctions of the Holy Ghost, "Pray without ceasing," "In everything make known your requests."

In Daniel's refusal we are reminded of the

aged Polycarp's sublime reply. Like the ancient prophet, this early Christian disciple was called upon by persecutors to deny his Master. "Eighty-and six years," answered he, "have I served Him, and has He blessed me. Why should I now deny Him?"

A consistent Christian life carries its own witness and wins the respect and admiration of honest worldly men. It is an element of mighty force and vast effectiveness in the extension of Christ's kingdom of truth among men.

God will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Fidelity to Him is sure of the richest present or ultimate reward.

As here, so ever, God brings to naught the malice of the wicked against the good. Often, too, He turns upon the evil the force of their own destructive machinations.

The supreme teaching of the eleventh of Hebrews, the one great truth of Revelation, is here signally illustrated: We are saved by grace, God's favor, *through* faith—an obedient, *vital* faith in God's promised mercy.

A life of activity needs, as a preparation or as a counterpoise and restorative, its times of retirement and prayerful thought. The still hour of quiet thought and devout communion with our Heavenly Father fills the soul with light, girds it with strength, and cheers it with hope and serene, glad trust. B.

The grandeur of the Book of Daniel is not only the sweep of those majestic visions which opened the mysteries of future time, but the vivid portrait it holds before us of a man who has all the springs of his actions in faithfulness to God—a man so thoroughly forgetful of himself that the one only question which rises in him, when anything is to be done or suffered, is whether that thing is his Lord's will. If it is, no doubt remains; nothing is to be said or thought about costs or consequences. If it is not, no consequences will justify it. F. D. H.

Such honor as we give to martyrs must needs be accorded to the prophet Daniel. A martyr—so far as the strict etymology of the word goes—is one who witnesses, and is usually applied exclusively to one who has witnessed unto death for righteousness and truth. Those who witness to the truth without dying for it are commonly called confessors. It would be difficult to decide to which "goodly fellowship" Daniel strictly belonged. But we are not careful to decide; enough for us to know that all the essential characteristics of those who are enrolled in "the noble army of martyrs" were found in him. *Pusey*.



## DANIEL, CHAPTER VII.

**7:1** In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of  
 2 his head upon his bed : then he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters. Daniel  
 spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven  
 3 brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one  
 4 from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings : I beheld till the wings  
 thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon two feet  
 5 as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a  
 bear, and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in his mouth between his teeth :  
 6 and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo another,  
 like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl ; the beast had also four  
 7 heads ; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a  
 fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly ; and it had great iron teeth : it  
 devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet : and it was diverse  
 8 from all the beasts that were before it ; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and,  
 behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first  
 horns were plucked up by the roots : and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a  
 9 man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that  
 was ancient of days did sit : his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like  
 10 pure wool ; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery  
 stream issued and came forth from before him : thousand thousands ministered unto him,  
 and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him : the judgement was set, and the  
 11 books were opened. I beheld at that time because of the voice of the great words which  
 the horn spake ; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and he was  
 12 given to be burned with fire. And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken  
 13 away : yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions,  
 and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came  
 14 even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given  
 him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should  
 serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his  
 kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.  
 15 As for me Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my  
 16 head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth  
 concerning all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.  
 17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.  
 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for  
 19 ever, even for ever and ever. Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth  
 beast, which was diverse from all of them, exceeding terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and  
 his nails of brass ; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet ;  
 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on his head, and the other *horn* which came up, and  
 before which three fell ; even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things,  
 21 whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with  
 22 the saints, and prevailed against them ; until the ancient of days came, and judgement was  
 given to the saints of the Most High ; and the time came that the saints possessed the king-  
 23 dom. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be  
 diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down,  
 24 and break it in pieces. And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise :  
 and another shall arise after them ; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put  
 25 down three things. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out  
 the saints of the Most High : and he shall think to change the times and the law ; and they  
 26 shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time. But the judgement  
 shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.  
 27 And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole

heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High : his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Here is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my thoughts much troubled me, and my countenance was changed in me : but I kept the matter in my heart.

**Chap. 7.** In point of chronology this chapter comes between chaps. 4 and 5. Years had elapsed between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and "the first year of Belshazzar;" years pregnant with those political convulsions which broke forth—so far as Babylonia was concerned—during the joint reign of Nabonadius and his son : years of silence and patient waiting on the part of the aging prophet. Daniel, in the comparative obscurity and retirement which was probably his lot, had not been a politician, a courtier, a man, had he not been keenly alive to the stirring events around him ; he had not been the God-fearing, prayerful, trustful Israelite, had he not seen in them the probable results which should bring in "the kingdom of the saints of the Most High" (verse 18). The prophetic visions which commence with this chapter reflect both this natural and spiritual coloring. Full of remembrances of the dreams recorded in chaps. 2 and 4, they show the marked impression those dreams had made upon him both as a young and middle-aged man. If they are marked by a symbolism and imagery more striking than that of Ezekiel, it is one which modern research has shown to be probable, in accordance with the teaching and training of the "schools," and impossible to a writer unfamiliar with what is here described. B. C.

What did God do in order to give Daniel an idea of the four phases through which the history of mankind was to pass before the coming of the Messiah ? Did He give him an historical lecture upon the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks and Romans ? No, He caused to pass before him five pictures or images, of which the remembrance remained indelible—a winged lion, symbol of the Babylonish power ; a bear, with slow and heavy tread, emblem of the Persian majesty ; a leopard with four heads, traversing the earth as on the wing, the visible representation of the Alexandrian monarchy, so rapidly founded, so speedily divided into four distinct States ; then lastly, a monster with nothing corresponding to him in the terrestrial creation, trampling and devouring everything that comes in its way, image of the Roman empire, that State which has borne no resemblance to anything before known, and which absorbed everything into itself ; and finally, as the last of these apparitions, the form of a Son of Man coming upon

the clouds, emblem of the only really human power, of the love which comes down from heaven to found here below the kingdom of liberty and of truth. This is the manner in which God teaches history when He thinks good to make it known beforehand to His servants the prophets. He does not discuss, He does not catechise, He pictures. This method has the double advantage of making its appeal to man in his whole being, consequently not perverting the nature of faith, and of not rendering science superfluous by anticipating its future labors. All the researches of historians, all the discoveries of the investigators of ruins and of buried palaces, instead of being made useless by such revelation, only serve to make more exact, and to enrich the pictures by means of which it was accomplished. *Goulet.*

This chapter gives the second of the four great prophecies of Daniel—a vision obviously in a very close analogy with that of chap. 2 : 31-45, and in partial parallel with that of chap. 8, and also that of chaps. 10-12. The prophet sees in succession four great beasts, the last of which has ten horns and ultimately an eleventh (verses 2-8) ; he then sees the fourth beast judged and slain (verses 9-11) ; next "one like a Son of Man," receiving his eternal kingdom (verses 13, 14) ; finally, he asks and obtains an interpretation of this vision, especially of the fourth beast and his horns (verses 15-28). H. C.

**2.** The third person is used through the first six chapters of Daniel, and at the opening of the seventh. The first then takes its place to the end of chap. 9. The third recurs in the first verse of chap. 10, after which the first is used uninterruptedly. Thucydides begins his history in the third person, but changes to the first after a few chapters. In Book IV. he resumes the third. In Book V., chap. 26, he begins in the third, but runs on into the first, which he again uses in Book VIII., chap. 97. G. R.

**2, 3.** The elements of nature in commotion symbolize convulsions in the political elements. These four great beasts come forth from the agitated sea, manifestly *in succession*, to denote succession in the order of time in the great empires of which they are the symbols. H. C.

**1.** *The first was like a lion.* This is the kingdom of the Babylonians ; and the king of Babylon is in like manner compared to a lion by Jeremiah (chap. 4 : 7), and is said to fly as an

eagle (chap. 48 : 40) ; and he is also compared to an eagle by Ezekiel (chap. 17 : 3, 12). The lion is esteemed the king of beasts and the eagle the king of birds ; and therefore the kingdom of Babylon, which is described as the first and noblest kingdom, and was the kingdom then in being, is said to partake of the nature of both. "The eagle's wings" denote its swiftness and rapidity ; and the conquests of Babylon were very rapid—that empire being advanced to the height within a few years by a single person, by the conduct and arms of Nebuchadnezzar. *Bp. Newton*.

"Winged Lions," "winged bulls," and even human figures with wings extending from the shoulders, have been disinterred in considerable numbers from the ruins of Nineveh within the present century, affording remarkable proof that these conceptions in this vision of Daniel, and also in Ezekiel (chap. 1) and elsewhere, are fully in keeping with the popular ideas and the artistic usages of the people living in the valley of the Euphrates during the age of these prophets. Moreover, the lion and the eagle were then, as now, symbols of royalty, figuring conspicuously in the memorial arms of sovereigns. So this first beast is a lion with eagle's wings. As Daniel continued to study this beast, lo, a change comes over him. His wings are plucked ; he is lifted up to stand erect as a man, and a man's heart is given him. This change is not from brutal to human intelligence, but from the brute force and resistless ferocity of the lion and the eagle to the comparative physical weakness of the man. The Chaldean empire is fast waning to its fall. Its glory has departed ; its pristine vigor has gone. The first three of these symbols—the lion, the bear, and the leopard—correspond so perfectly with the first three divisions of the great image—the head, the breast and arms, and the belly and thighs—that there is no occasion to raise any question for further explanation. It is not distinctly affirmed here that these beasts come forward in *succession*, each supplanting its predecessor. Yet it is very manifest that these beasts do follow each other in regular succession. The first has had great power, but is now seen shorn of it and ready to be vanquished. The second in its time is a devourer of nations ; to the third "dominion is given." No other view can reasonably be taken of these beasts considered as great national powers, except that they sway the empire of the world *successively*—each being for his time supreme on the field of their location. *H. C.*

5. It had three ribs in the mouth. This was

its booty or prey. Of the many interpretations which had been given, the most satisfactory are those which understand by these "three ribs" either a round number or the chief conquests of Cyrus—Lydia (and the kingdoms of Asia Minor), Bactria (and the vast tract between the Caspian and the Indus), and Babylonia. These kingdoms were grasped with a grasp as tenacious as that with which the bear would hold its prey between its fangs. Yet were these not to be the only conquests of the Medo-Persian power : "Arise, devour," etc., was at once a charge and a prophecy which reached its climax in the mighty victories of the great Darius. *B. C.*

6. This beast, all commentators agree, is the Grecian empire of Alexander—winged to denote the velocity of its armies and the rapidity of its conquests. "Dominion given to it," almost drops the figure of a beast, to give us in literal phrase the history of this power. Correspondingly the passage (chap. 2 : 39) has it, "Another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth." *H. C.*

*Another, like a leopard.* This is the kingdom of the Macedonians or Grecians, who, under the command of Alexander the Great, overcame the Persians and reigned next after them. The leopard is remarkable for its swiftness (see Hab. 1 : 8) and for the impetuosity with which it springs upon its prey ; and Alexander and the Macedonians were amazingly swift and rapid in their conquests. This rapidity is further intimated by the "four wings on the back" of the beast. The Babylonian empire was represented with two wings, but this with four ; for, as Jerome saith, nothing was swifter than the victories of Alexander. The "four heads" of the beast denote the four kingdoms into which the empire of Alexander was divided at his death by his four captains—Cassander reigning over Macedonia and Greece, Lysimachus over Thrace and Bithynia, Ptolemy over Egypt, and Seleucus over Syria.

7. This fourth kingdom can be no other than the Roman empire, which was "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly," beyond any of the former kingdoms. It was "diverse from all kingdoms," not only in its republican form of government, but likewise in strength, and power, and greatness, length of duration and extent of dominion. "It devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it ;" it reduced Macedon into a Roman province about one hundred and sixty-eight years, the kingdom of Pergamus about one hundred and thirty-three years, Syria about sixty-five

years, and Egypt about thirty years before Christ. And besides the remains of the Macedonian empire, it subdued many other provinces and kingdoms, so that it might by a very usual figure be said to "devour the whole earth, and to tread it down and break it in pieces;" and became in a manner what the Roman writers delighted to call it, the empire of the whole world.

*It had ten horns.* Another remarkable property of this fourth beast is that "it had ten horns;" and, according to the angel's interpretation (verse 24), "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings" or kingdoms "that shall arise." "Four kings" a little before (verse 17) signified *four kingdoms*; and so here "ten kings" are *ten kingdoms*, according to the usual phraseology of Scripture. We must look for these kingdoms amid the broken pieces of the Roman empire, represented under the fourth beast. The Roman empire was, by means of the incursions of the northern nations, dismembered into ten kingdoms, and Machiavel hath given us their names: (1) the Ostrogoths in Maesia; (2) the Visigoths in Pannonia; (3) the Sueves and Alans in Gascoigne and Spain; (4) the Vandals in Africa; (5) the Franks in France; (6) the Burgundians in Burgundy; (7) the Heruli and Turingi in Italy; (8) the Saxons and Angles in Britain; (9) the Huns in Hungary; (10) the Lombards, at first upon the Danube, afterward in Italy. *Bp. Newton.*

The names of these ten kingdoms have been enumerated by several writers of the most respectable authority; and the few variations in their accounts may be readily explained from the confusion and uncertainty of the times of which they wrote. It is enough for us, and an illustrious verification of the prophecies of holy Scripture, that such a partition was noticed long before by Daniel; and that among other particularities mentioned as incident to the fourth beast, this of ten horns springing all together from its head was recorded as one; and that these horns were expressly interpreted to mean ten kings or kingdoms. *Bp. Hallifax.*

In the ten horns we recognize at the first glance the ten toes of the second chapter. They are introduced merely to show (verse 8) how an *eleventh* has sprung up in their midst, a king in whom the full haughty hatred and rebellion of the world against God, His people, and His service, finds its representative. In the seventh chapter the distinction between iron and clay is omitted; in the second chapter there is no mention of this anti-Christian ruler of the world. In this description of the last monarchy the dis-

tinct and individual character of the two visions is most clearly manifested in the peculiar features to which each of them gives prominence. *Ankeren.*

*8. Behold, there came up among them another little horn.* In all the several respects which the prophet notices, the Pope fully answers the character of the "little horn;" so that if exquisite fitness of application may assure us of the true sense of the prophecy we can have no doubt concerning the person. He is here called "a little horn;" and the power of the popes was originally very small, and their temporal dominions were little and inconsiderable in comparison with others of the ten horns. *Bp. Newton.*

*Before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.* Three of the ten kingdoms—viz., those of the Heruli, the Ostrogoths and the Lombards, were successively plucked up or eradicated before the little horn, in the way of which they stood; and by the annexation of their dominions to the papacy, the Pope became also a temporal power. Hence he assumed the three keys in his arms, and the triple crown or mitre as a temporal prince; and "his look was more stout than his fellows," whom he frequently awed by his anathemas and excommunications. *Dr. Hales.*

*9. "Till the thrones are set up"—i.e., put in place to be occupied by the Ancient of Days.* Instances of the usage are to be seen in Jer. 1: 15 and in Rev. 4: 2. The thrones were erected in the same manner and for the same purpose as in the thrilling vision of John, recorded in the Apocalypse: "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" (20: 11). *Chambers.*

*9, 10. The Ancient of Days upon the throne of judgment.* This portion of Daniel's vision seems to indicate successive periods of duration. This we infer from the repeated use of the expression, "I beheld." The word "thrones" refers, not to the empires whose history had just been outlined, but to the seats of judgment which were now firmly placed or established preparatory to use. These thrones were arranged for those spiritual beings who in the Apocalypse are represented as taking part with the Supreme Being in the exercise of judgment. References to this we find in the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles.

There are points of similarity in the details of the vision of Daniel and that of Ezekiel. Both were familiar with the titles of the Chaldean gods and the peculiar modes of represent-

ing the attributes of these gods. The expression "an Ancient of Days," here employed by Daniel, was one of these Chaldean titles. As used by him, it refers to Jehovah. As here described, the seeming was as of an aged man with white garments, indicating purity; with shining hair, a symbol of lasting existence; upon a throne (of fiery flame), represented as a movable chariot, with wheels whose movement threw out flashes as of fire. Similar symbols are employed by Ezekiel, first chapter. There we find Jehovah appearing upon a throne which rests upon a platform upheld by living creatures, strangely associated with living wheels and with the symbol of fire. Both prophets simply narrate a vision of symbols, not realities.

Corresponding with the river of water of life in Rev. 22, a fiery stream is here described as issuing forth from the throne of God. B.—Fire and the shining of fire are the constant phenomena of the manifestation of God in the world, as the earthly elements most fitting for the representations of the burning zeal with which the holy God not only punishes and destroys sinners, but also purifies and renders glorious His own people. *Kil.*

As in the Revelation also (chap. 5), an innumerable multitude, ready for active ministry, is here represented as surrounding the throne. And similarly, too, here we behold the judgment set—*i.e.*, the judges upon their thrones; and the books in which were the materials upon which the judgment should be based. But with these naturally similar symbols and surroundings, the parallel ends. B.

9. We know that "when we shall be like 'God,' we shall see Him as He is." God, we may be certain, sits on no throne, neither is He borne along on wheels. In His essence God is not to be conceived as He appeared to His prophet and holy men of old. By them He is described under various forms, in order that men, to whom He willed to give some sign of His presence, should be drawn to Him. *Calvin.*

9-14. Verses 9 and 10 disclose, in a sublime symbolic picture, the fact of a universal Divine judgment in continuous process of execution against nations in this world. This process is definitely applied in verse 11 to the kingdom of the fourth beast, and in retrospect, in verse 12, to the previous three kingdoms, while in the 13th and 14th verses the Messiah appears before the enthroned Deity, and to Him is assigned a final, universal and everlasting dominion in earth and heaven. This seems to exhaust

the meaning of the whole passage, which therefore seems to have no direct reference to the final general judgment as distinguished from providential judgments in time. B.

Taking the main points of this passage in the order in which they stand, we have: (a) The Almighty God *enthroned*. Correspondingly in other Hebrew theophanies: Isaiah (6: 1) "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up." Micah (1 K. 22: 19) "saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left." The psalmist (11: 4, 6) writes, "The Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men. . . . Upon the wicked He will rain fire and brimstone and an horrible tempest," etc. "His garments white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool," has its analogy in the Apocalypse (1: 14). "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." Age is venerable; its incidents are clustered upon this personage to bespeak for Him reverence and homage. He is "the Ancient of Days." (b) This throne is on wheels, and has the aspect of fire and flame. So in Ezek. 1. The visible glory of Jehovah appears upon a throne, which itself reposes upon a "firmament" or elevated platform, supported by four living creatures, who are singularly connected with living wheels. Here also is the aspect of fire. "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps; it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning" (Ezek. 1: 13). (c) Fire issues forth from God to devour His enemies. Here in Daniel, "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him." So Ps. 50: 5, "Our God shall come, a fire shall devour before Him; it shall be very tempestuous round about Him." And Ps. 97: 3, "A fire goeth before Him and burneth up His enemies round about." In David's glowing description of the Lord's coming to his aid against his foes (Ps. 18: 8) we read: "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils; fire out of His mouth devoured." So also Moses (De. 5: 24), "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." So in Heb. 12: 29, "For our God is a consuming fire." The fire sent on Sodom seems to have been a standing type or model of God's judgments on corrupt nations, and to have supplied the figures of speech to express this idea. In Isa. 34: 9, 10, the allusion to that model is specially palpable. Of Idumea the prophet said,

"The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever." Hence fire became the usual symbol to denote the judgments which the Lord in His providence brings upon guilty nations in time, of which fact it may suffice to quote but one more passage (Isa. 66:15, 16): "For behold the Lord will come with fire and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire; for by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many." The reader may add Mal. 4:1, 3. (d) Thousands of attendant ministering angels. Here it stands: "Thousand thousands ministered unto Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." The fact that they ministered to Him shows them to be, not culprits at His bar, but servants awaiting His command. To "stand before Him" is also the customary attitude of His attendant angels. Not in the final judgment alone, but wherever the Lord appears in His glory and majesty and lets men see the realities of the spiritual world, angels are seen about Him as His executive agents. Michael saw all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left (1 K. 22:19). When on Sinai there "went forth from the Lord's right hand a fiery law for them" (De. 33:2), "He came with ten thousand of saints," holy ones; said by the psalmist (68:17) to have been "thousands of angels." Zech. 14:5 has the same feature: "There comes the Lord my God! All the holy ones are with Thee." (e) The forms of a judicial tribunal. The close analogy between the judicial proceedings of human courts and of the Divine, accounts most amply for these allusions. Thus Daniel: "The judgment was set and the books were opened;" and verse 26, "The judgment shall sit." So elsewhere in those cases where the Lord comes down for the judgment of wicked nations. Ps. 50 is a case where the Lord "calls to the heavens from above and to the earth, that He may judge His people, for God is judge Himself." Joel 3 is wholly in this strain. "Let the heathen be awakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about." I am not aware that any other Hebrew theophany save this of Daniel introduces the symbol of "the books" as witnessing records against the wicked, but there is surely no reason for assuming that this

symbol can be used of no other judgment than that at the end of the world. All the rest of these symbols are used, elsewhere than in Daniel, to denote the visitations of Divine judgment on guilty nations in time. (f) Let me add that this destruction of the fourth beast and his horns must correspond with the stone smiting the great image upon his feet of iron and clay (chap. 2:34, 35). As this smiting was a judgment in time, so is the judgment in the verses before us. H. C.

The judgment from heaven is connected with the end of the four universal monarchies and the destruction of antichrist. This alone suffices to show that the judgment here spoken of is not the last judgment; for at the last judgment there will be neither beast, nor kingdom, nor antichrist upon earth, but heaven and earth will then have passed away. *Roos*.—The judgment in question is to take place after the monarchies described shall have existed, and after the little horn, or papal power, shall have prevailed in the earth. That the reference is not to the final judgment, or, what is more emphatically called the "last day," is evident, because here God the Father is said to occupy that judicial station which, in the New Testament, is universally ascribed to the Son; and because it is not the judgment of individuals, as when "small and great shall appear before God," but of nations and of the great anti-Christian power. We must bear in continual recollection that this is a *vision*, that the circumstances are the decorative arrangements of a court of justice, and of the Jewish council in particular; and that, therefore, like all hieroglyphic symbols, all scriptural allusions to the personal appearance, the form, the countenance, or the hands, arm and feet of the Almighty, it is a figurative adumbration of the great reality of a just, final and awful retribution that awaits anti-Christian nations. *F. A. Cox*.

**11, 12.** *Successive judgments upon the beasts.* Although the description of the judgment referred to here has many correspondences with the final and general judgment referred to in the Apocalypse, it is yet a wholly different one. The subjects of the judgment in Daniel's vision are definitely described. They are the beasts or empires, whose history is outlined in the vision. The introductory and accompanying characteristics of the *general* judgment are wanting; and the Judge, in this *special* judgment, is the Eternal Father. It is a *providential* judgment, with limitation of its award to this world; a judgment upon *nations as such*, collectively, not a judgment that separates in-

*dividuals of all nations* into two great masses, and pronounces a changeless and enduring award upon each according to *personal* character.

Of the two interpretations respecting the "beast" or fourth kingdom, it would seem that the older and the more widely received, whatever difficulties properly belong to it, has yet a far stronger basis than the modern theory. A fatal objection to the latter appears to be this: that in a broad scheme of providential events, impliedly covering the whole series of world empires, *that empire which was widest, grandest, and mightiest of all is utterly unmentioned and ignored.* And the strange, strong figures, descriptive of the fourth kingdom, which admirably depict the wondrous history of the Roman empire, the modern view refers to persons and events of comparative insignificance. B.

The fourth kingdom is represented as "diverse from all that were before it," and as "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly," having "great iron teeth," and devouring and breaking in pieces and stamping the residue with its feet, as it is also represented in chap. 2 by two great iron legs. This description is not at all applicable to the empire of the successors of Alexander, which, so far from being diverse from all that went before it, was merely a continuation of the Greek dominion which preceded it, and was at no time terrible, having only, in its integrity, a brief continuance of twenty years of confusion and weakness; and the cruelties of a king of a single one of the fragments of the empire does not accord with the representation of the prophet, that the empire *before* its division would be terrible and strong, like legs of iron, but the prophet's description *does* apply to the Roman empire, which was entirely diverse from all the empires which preceded it, being the empire of a different race and a different civilization, and was terribly strong and fierce, trampling down with its armies all that opposed it, ruling with an iron sceptre, and destroying and stamping in pieces, as is illustrated in its treatment of Carthage and Jerusalem. *Anon.*

11. The "horn" referred to here is the "little horn" which was to spring up in the midst of the "ten horns" or kingdoms, into which the "beast" here spoken of (the fourth empire) would be broken up. B.

There was to spring up in the midst of the ten horns a "little horn," politically and physically small, but, from its pretensions and its assumptions, terrible and influential. This lit-

tle horn was to pull down three of the ten horns. It should be "a horn," having political power, but should have eyes for seeing or superintending. It was also to have a mouth, speaking great things; a preacher of proud pretensions, or a doctor of despotic law. As another feature, it was to uproot three out of the ten kingdoms. Every feature of the prophecy is met and embodied in the history of the papal power. The three kingdoms that were rooted up by this little horn were the three kingdoms of the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and the Lombards, who were, after a succession of troubles, rooted up by the papacy, and constituted into the States of the Church; and the Pope wears upon his head at this very moment the tiara, or three-crowned cap, to denote the three kingdoms or horns which he rooted up, and over which he now reigns. Of the prediction that "he will make war with the saints," the whole history of Europe is painfully conclusive evidence. *Cumming.*

The "great words which the horn spake" (verse 11) were haughty, blasphemous, tyrannous and persecuting words. The verse only *intimates* a judgment on this horn, while it *predicts* a destroying judgment against the fourth empire, of whose divisions it formed a part. "Concerning the rest of the beasts," the other three world empires, Daniel further intimates the judgment of the enthroned "Ancient of Days"—that their nationalities and the results of their influence should continue for an undefined period after their sovereignty had ceased.

13, 14. *The Son of Man receives universal and everlasting dominion.* When we note these clear, definite statements, we are not surprised at the agreement of all Jewish and Christian writers respecting their reference and meaning. This expression, "Son of Man," used here by Daniel, is employed many times by Ezekiel. Daniel saw, not a "Son of Man," but "one like a Son of Man;" no symbolic animal forms such as came before in the vision, typifying and representing mere human elements and forces concentrated in separate and successive empires, but a personal superhuman being, though in human form, coming not as the beasts from the earth, but appearing in the clouds of heaven, ensphered in the only known symbol of Deity—this personal being Daniel beheld coming to and standing beside the Ancient of Days. Two distinct persons of the Godhead are here clearly disclosed—the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son. And from this expression of Daniel was taken, of purpose, the

title which Christ appropriated to Himself, and which His apostles never used concerning Him, Son of Man—a title which He used to emphasize the great fact of His humanity, upon which rested the vital efficacy of his redeeming work for man.

And here we have the grand announcement, so often referred to by patriarchs, prophets, psalmists and apostles, and by Christ Himself, of a universal, everlasting dominion given by the Eternal Father to the Eternal Son. Unlike all previous and subsequent earthly empires, this dominion is established in the hearts of its subjects, thus controlling the lives and rendering them tributary to the glory of the Divine Monarch. Unlike all earthly kingdoms, this links heaven with earth, eternity with time. Hence it cannot be destroyed; it cannot pass away. Its existence is decreed by the Infinite Mind, sustained by omnipotent might; its glory and blessedness are assured by an immutable promise. Seven centuries later, after the incarnation and ascension of the Eternal Son, another inspired seer disclosed in another vision the same sublime announcement. Nay, John goes further than Daniel; he reveals the Divine purpose as fulfilled, the Divine promise as consummated in the actual heavenly enthronement of the Lamb, the Eternal Son. And in this disclosure, so assuring, inciting and comforting, are we in these later days of the *promise*, and in closer proximity to its fulfilment, privileged to toil and endure, to rest and rejoice. B.

It is quite in keeping with the universal horizon of Daniel's prophecy that Messiah is not designated as the Son of David, but, in general, as the Son of Man; no more as King of Israel only, but as King of the world. The Messiah is no longer represented as the theocratic King coming to the covenant people, but He appears a centre of unity both for the covenant people and the Gentile world. *Anborten*.

Our Lord not only cites the prophet Daniel by name, when speaking of "the abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24: 15), but He adopted from that book the designation of His kingdom and the title which He appropriates to Himself. The expressions, "kingdom of heaven" and "Son of Man," are confessedly taken from the second and seventh chapters of Daniel. Of the latter expression, Meyer (Matt. 8: 20) says: "Its simple meaning is, *The Messiah*. Jesus, inasmuch as in Him the Messiah was come, was, in the realization that Son of Man whose form was seen in Daniel's vision. As often, therefore, as Jesus in His discourses says 'The Son

of Man,' He means 'The Son of Man of that vision of Daniel'—that is, the Messiah." The question of the genuineness and authenticity of Daniel cannot, therefore, be separated from that respecting the fallibility or infallibility of the Saviour. By asserting that the Book of Daniel is a forged and false prophecy, men charge our Lord with the uncritical ignorance of His times, or a deliberate application of a document which He knew to be false. *McCaul*.

The centring of biblical truth in the person of Christ receives its grandest illustration in the biblical doctrine of Christ's mediatorial reign. This is the special teaching of the text before us. It is but a hint of a more resplendent revelation, which runs through the whole history of redemption. This "Son of Man" in the night visions of the prophet is He to whom "all power is given in heaven and on earth. God has highly exalted Him. At His name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

We are not alone, then, in the interest we feel in Christ. He is the centre of thought also to the whole universe of mind. His is the empire of the universe. Sympathy with His work here is felt in distant worlds. Principalities and powers in heavenly places stand in awe-struck study around this one spot where the mystery of redemption is unfolding. A strange gravitation draws them to this one globe above all others in inhabited space. Such is the impression which the biblical glimpses of other worlds leave upon us. This is known to the universe as the "world of the cross." Lost spirits know it as the "world of the cross." Ministering angels know it as the "world of the cross." We do not know that another such world exists within the bounds of creation. If demoniacal alliances are formed against it, to clutch it from the hands of its Redeemer, from holy worlds come spiritual reinforcements in innumerable battalions to its rescue. Dr. Chalmers did no violence to the scriptural disclosures of the reign of Christ, when he represented the worlds of invisible being as pulsating and growing tremulous in sympathy with the conflicts of the cross. In the biblical story of redemption our atmosphere seems populous with spiritual legions marching and countermarching at the bidding of the Captain of our salvation. *Phelps*.

The human love of the Saviour attracts us human beings quite as much as His Divine love. He was called by His disciples the Son of God; He called Himself the Son of Man. By all means, as we point men's eyes to Him, say,



"*Eecce Deus!*" for we may see His divinity shining through the veil of His humanity; but let us also say, "*Eecce homo!*" for it is His humanity which first meets our eye. In heaven, when we look up to it, we see "Him that sitteth on the throne," but we see also "Him that was slain;" we see the throne, but "in the very midst of it a lamb as it had been slain." *McCosh.*

18. The saints are the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), a congregation collected from Israel and all nations, and called to be saints (Ex. 19:6; De. 7:6; Isa. 4:3; 6:13; Rom. 9:6). These "take" the kingdom, or, rather, they "receive" it from Him who can alone give kingdoms and "possess" it with "power" (2:37; 4:30) "forever," etc. B. C.

It is plain that these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God in reference to the persecutions they were likely to sustain both from the one and from the other, and from all their proud enemies in every age; for it is written for their learning on whom the ends of the world are come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this Scripture, might have hope. II.

21. *The same horn made war with the saints.* And below, he "shall wear out the saints of the Most High" (verse 25)—that is, by wars, and massacres, and inquisitions, persecuting and destroying the faithful servants of Jesus and the true worshippers of God, who protest against his innovations and refuse to comply with the idolatry practised in the Church of Rome.

25. Or, as Symmachus interprets it, "he shall speak great words as the Most High;" setting up himself above all laws, Divine and human, arrogating to himself godlike attributes and titles of holiness and infallibility; exacting obedience to his ordinances and decrees in preference to and open violation of reason and Scripture; insulting men and blaspheming God.

*And think to change times and laws.* Appointing fasts and feasts, canonizing saints, granting pardons and indulgences for sins, instituting new modes of worship, imposing new articles of faith, enjoining new rules of practice, and reversing at pleasure the laws both of God and men. *Bp. Newton.*

*Time and times and half a time.* This expression has a closer definition in 8:14, "two thousand and three hundred days," and is again typified in the "time, times, and a half" of 12:7; but of which it is best to say plainly with Saadiah, "no one knows its meaning but

God alone." What is thought and said about it is simply conjectural. The most satisfactory explanation of this very difficult phrase is that no full and complete period of power shall be given to the "little horn," but that "the days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:20), and some saved. B. C.

27. The dominion of the Lord Christ is eternal, and His kingdom as such cannot be destroyed. No power of this world can destroy it. Not even the last judgment shall put an end to it, but only give it a new and more glorious appearance; for after the last judgment the New Jerusalem shall come down from heaven, and the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the midst of it. *Ross.*

In ancient history men often see nothing, and point out nothing but a succession of monarchies mutually overturning one another; nothing but a series of bloody wars, leaving behind them cities in ruin and nations crushed or carried into captivity. Behind these mighty convulsions of the ancient world men do not discern the real history—that of humanity laboring at the work of laying hold of, and understanding itself, and travelling in birth of man—the true man. As in the epochs anterior to man, behind the gigantic ferns, the voracious amphibians, and the monstrous quadrupeds, we recognize fundamentally one thing only—nature working its way up to man; so in the colossal monarchies which one after another, in the ages before Christ, filled the stage of history—in the Assyrian-Babylonish world, with its crushing military power; in the Medo-Persian kingdom, with its strong administrative organization; in the Greek race, with its incomparable artistic and scientific genius; in the Roman empire, with its powerful political centralization—the true historian recognizes one thing: humanity striving after the full development of its manifold faculties, the complete mastery of itself and of the world; man laboring to get full possession of himself, in prospect of a destiny which he does not yet clearly comprehend—that of voluntary self-surrender. Certainly it cannot be said that four thousand years was too long for such a work. *Goulet.*

Daniel was permitted to behold the historic transfer of races, and governments, and trades, and destinies to their appointed owner, the King of kings and Lord of lords. These prophetic paragraphs, therefore, are a carefully-prepared chart, revealing the course of empire till its consummates and ends in the universal

reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Power, and greatness, and government shall descend, says the prophet, through successive administrations and intermediate thrones—the Assyrian, the Roman, the papal, to the last era—and the closing stage, when the saints of the Most High God shall take the kingdom and superintend it in the name of their Lord. *Walter Clarke.*

Christianity stands committed to the achievement of universal dominion. Its Founder puts it forward into history as the universal religion, foreordained to universal prevalence. For those of us who worship Christ as God this prophetic assurance of final victory is enough. Our lines might be much thinner than they are, our march much slower, our trophies fewer, and still we should not be disheartened. We should still stand fast by the ancient bond, which gives Christ the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Generation after generation might succeed to the arduous struggle, and still the Church would maintain the conflict, never doubting that the time will come, however distant, when her camp fires shall be kindled on every hilltop from the rising to the setting sun. *R. D. Hitchcock.*

The Heavenly Deliverer is called the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David, the Son of God, and the Messiah, or anointed of the Lord. The series of predictions concerning Him runs from the first book of the Old Testament to the last book of the New. It may be divided into three volumes, the first of which culminates in Isaiah, the second in Daniel, and the third in the Revelation of John. The Messiah is described throughout as a king, a priest, and a prophet. The time and place of His birth are so plainly indicated that men were expecting Him when He came. He is declared to be the Son of Man, but at the same time the Son of God. Collateral predictions concerning persons or kingdoms that come into contact with Him or His people are communicated with the utmost ease and certainty. The most striking examples of this are the future of the Jews and the destinies of the four world monarchies. As we pass along the stream of actually past time, we can note the fulfilment of successive parts of this great system of prognostication. A culminating point in the progress of events was the birth, life and death of Immanuel, in which He performed the great priestly act of offering Himself a sacrifice for sin, so becoming the propitiation for the whole world. *Murphy.*

For Him, the Christ of the Old Testament and the New, we claim the first and foremost place in the *annals of the world's history*, on the *domain of religion*, on the *field of theological doctrine*, in the *sphere of individual and social life*. For Him we vindicate, first of all, a prominent, central place in the *history of the world and of mankind*. When we contemplate this world from the right angle and in true light, there is only one view admissible, surpassing that of any philosophical system in depth, beauty and harmony of conception; it is that which makes the Son of Man the centre and axis of the world, and finds its expression in the words, "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist"—properly have their *consistency* through Him alone—that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Christ is not only the crown and the glory, He is the core, the heart, the pulse, and the highest ideal of mankind, in whom its essence and destination is shown, unto whom the whole history of humanity tends, without whom its annals remain a book-rolled closed with seven seals. He, the God-man, crowns the past, rules the present, conquers the future. For Him, again, we ask the first place on the domain of *religion*. Christianity is not merely a religion surpassing all others; it is the only true religion for mankind and men, because it alone manifests the *special*, the *accomplished revelation* of God's grace and our salvation. And for this Christ we claim the first and central place on the field of theology, more especially of *doctrinal and moral truth*. From our standpoint, theology is and remains an independent, self-relying science, as the science of the faith in Him who, as being the true Life, makes the true Light radiate from the centre He occupies into all directions. Doctrinal and moral truth, no longer are they now separated, still less divided by a wide gap. They are one and indivisible now by the same Christocentric character. Christ Himself is the fountain and the focus of both. Lastly, for Him we require, with an undeniable claim, the first and central place in *every sphere of individual and social life*. It may be possible to know God in some measure by nature, but we can possess Him only by Christ. Christ, and He alone, the King for heart and soul, in the family and the society, in arts and science, in the free Church and in the free State! *Van O.*

The only matters of real moment pertaining to these and all other prophetic statements, belong to *facts* clearly revealed. The usual effect of any *theory*, pored over until it is blindly ac-

cepted as fact, cannot be good. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but these that are revealed belong to us, that we may do God's law." Here is a scriptural criterion that applies to the study of prophecy. Surely it is enough to know that the establishment of Christ's kingdom is now going forward, and that it shall be consummated in God's good time. The when, where and how which apply to the unknown future cannot be ascertained. Better engage all our mental and spiritual energies in filling our part in the advancement of the kingdom, and so hastening the transcendent consummation. A reverent, loyal spirit will overcome all discouragements in simple trust in God's working and promise; it will stimulate us to work in our lot, to contribute of all that is entrusted us, of mind and heart, of voice and hand, of influence and of purse, of prayer and intercession—to contribute *something every day* to the incoming of Christ's kingdom upon earth, and His ultimate everlasting dominion in glory. B.

A hundred years hence, perhaps another eighty years, will see the world generally Christianized, if the courage and enterprise of Christian disciples are at all a match for their great opportunity. Here then appears the immense and pressing duty of our time; pressing as the inexorable movement of the years, urgent as the moral and social need of mankind, superlative as the nature and work of the Lord! Here appears, too, our noblest privilege—the privilege of taking part in this majestic cosmic enterprise; of following in the line of those whose faith, consecration, and holy heroism have built Christendom, and have made the religion which to human eyes came out of Galilee familiar in its name, and in many of its principles, wherever thought has language for its vehicle; the privilege of coming to such fellowship with the Master as cannot be reached in song or sacrament, or in even the uplift and ecstasy of prayer. We touch His mighty and tender hand as nowhere else, when we are doing His work in the world. We come nearer to Him here than we can elsewhere until we see Him face to face; and many a distant missionary home, remote from civilization, planted amid an earthly darkness dense enough to be felt, is radiant with His manifest presence as the costliest chapel or the proudest cathedral never is. In this work we touch the future of the world, and put elements and forces into its history which shall be springing to their results long after the very stones at our graves shall have crumbled into dust. R. S. S.

*The Question of the Identity of the "Little Horn" of Chap. 7: 8, 20-22, and that of Chap. 8: 9-12.*

Our interpretation of the vision of the four beasts of Daniel has led us to look at the fourth as representing the Roman monarchy; which would presuppose in the author a knowledge truly prophetic. This application is rejected in modern times not only by authors of the rationalistic school, but also by such men as Delitzsch and Zöckler. The reason alleged by these latter is, that since the "little horn" in the seventh chapter, which appeared upon the fourth beast, must be the same as that in chap. 8, this latter having reference to the Grecian monarchy, it follows that the fourth monarchy in chap. 7 must be either the empire of Alexander or the kingdoms which grew out of it.

Let us first inquire whether the passage in Daniel can be explained if confined to the limits which such an interpretation would impose; and, next, whether the alleged identity between the two little horns of chaps. 7 and 8 is real.

The *lion* is identical with the head of gold in the vision of the image (chap. 2), as is shown by a comparison of the two visions with each other. And it follows from 2: 37, 38 that these two emblems refer to Nebuchadnezzar, and to the Chaldean monarchy personified in him: "Thou, O king, art this head of gold."

The *bear* which "raised itself up on one side, and had three ribs in the mouth of it," corresponds to the breast and arms of silver in the statue. It is natural, then, to apply this emblem to the Persian monarchy, which superseded the Babylonian empire. But this application would make it difficult to avoid interpreting the fourth beast of the Roman empire; and an attempt has been made to get over this in two ways. Hitzig proposed to refer the emblem of the bear specially to Belshazzar, the last great Babylonish sovereign. But it is quite clear that this empire is already fully represented in the first beast, the lion. In the interpretation of the breast and arms of silver given in 2: 39, we find it said to Nebuchadnezzar, not only, "Thou shalt have a *successor* inferior to thee," but "after thee shall arise *another kingdom* inferior to thee." Here, then, the subject spoken of is a second monarchy, not a continuation of the first. Delitzsch and others feel this, and accordingly they apply the emblem of the bear to the *Midian* empire, but making it distinct from the *Persian*. This distinction is rested upon 6: 28: "In the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

But this distinction between the Median and Persian monarchies is a pure fiction. The former would have lasted only two years, since Darius the Mede, who, according to this, founded it, died two years after the taking of Babylon, and Cyrus the Persian succeeded him! The fact is, that it never for an instant had an independent existence, since from the very first it was Cyrus the Persian who governed in the name of Darius the Mede. This latter reigned only in name. And that is precisely the meaning of the words in 6 : 28, which describe one and the same empire, with two sovereigns reigning simultaneously. And, besides, what would be the meaning of the expression, "devour much flesh," as addressed to this supposed Median empire, which would only have lasted two years? Delitzsch replies: "It is the expression of a simple *conatus*, of a desire for conquest which was never realized." As if an unfulfilled desire could have been admitted into a prophetic picture in which history is sketched on so large a scale! Lastly, the impossibility of this interpretation is clear from 5 : 28 and 6 : 12, which prove incontestably the identity of the two powers, of which it is desired to make distinct States: "Thy kingdom is given to the *Medes and Persians*;" and "the law of the *Medes and Persians*, which altereth not." The bear then represents unquestionably the Medo Persian monarchy. He supports himself on one side to signify that of the two nations which together constitute this empire, there is but one—the Persian—on which reposes the aggressive and conquering power of the monarchy. The three pieces of flesh (or three ribs, E. V.) which the bear holds in his mouth, represent the chief conquests of this second great empire. Some have thought of Lydia, Babylonia and Egypt; others substitute Phoenicia for Egypt. Judging from 8 : 3, 4, where the same kingdom is represented under the figure of a ram which had two horns, of which one (the Persian) was higher than the other (the Median), and which pushed with these horns in three directions, westward, northward and southward, I incline rather to the belief that these conquered countries are Bactriana (in the north), Babylonia and Lydia (in the west), and Egypt (in the south).

The next beast, the *leopard*, with four wings of a bird, and four heads, answers to the "belly and thighs of brass" in the image; it can only represent Alexander the Great and the Macedonian kingdom, which took the place of the Medo-Persian empire. From this point of view the emblems indicated are easily ex-

plained. The four wings represent the extraordinary rapidity of this young king's conquests; and the four heads, the four contemporaneous kingdoms in which the Grecian monarchy makes its appearance on the stage of history. We know that these four States were Macedonia, Thrace, Syria and Egypt. The Grecian monarchy never existed in any other than this fourfold form after the premature death of its founder. Moreover, we find the literal explanation of these figures in chap. 8, where it is said of the he-goat coming from the west, which overthrew the ram with two horns (the Medo-Persian empire, 5 : 20): "The he-goat is the *king of Grecia*, and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king; now that being broken . . . four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation." Notwithstanding these evidences, all those who are determined not to recognize in the fourth beast the Roman monarchy, apply the figure of the leopard to Cyrus and the Persian monarchy. But, in the first place, this interpretation involves the application of the figure of the bear either to Beshazzar, or to a Median kingdom distinct from the Persian, two suppositions which we have found to be inadmissible; besides, how are we then to explain the four wings and four heads? what have these emblems to do with the Persian monarchy? Rapidity of conquest, which is signified by the four wings, was not the distinctive feature of the Medo-Persian empire, while it is the salient characteristic of Alexander's power. As to the four heads, they represent, it is pretended, the four first kings of Persia. This interpretation would be forced even if Persia had had but four kings; for the four heads must represent four contemporaneous and not four successive powers. They belong to the form of the beast from his first appearance. But, further, Persia had many more than four sovereigns. What are we to make of the two Artaxerxeses, Longimanus and Mnemon, and of the two last Darineses, Ochus and Codoman? If the author writes as a prophet, how is it, we would ask, that he sees so dimly into the future? If he writes as an historian—that is to say, as a prophet who composes after the event—how, we would ask the rationalists, can he be so completely ignorant of the history which he is telling? And how, from this point of view, are we to get out of the difficulty of 8 : 21: "The he-goat (with four horns) is the king of Grecia?"

Lastly, appears the fourth beast, *the beast without a name*; this corresponds to the "legs of iron, and the feet, part of iron and part of

clay," of the image. This parallelism cannot be questioned. This fourth beast *devours and breaks in pieces* just as the iron feet of the image *break everything in pieces*; the ten horns of the beast answer to the ten toes of the image; this fourth beast immediately precedes the Messianic kingdom, just as the image is smitten and overthrown by the little stone, emblem of the Messiah. What is this last empire?

According to Delitzsch, Hitzig and many others, it is that of Alexander, or the Grecian monarchy, which—to follow the first of these authors—is confounded in the prophetic vision with the Romans, and with all the succeeding powers until the judgment. But we have seen that Alexander and the Grecian empire have been already prefigured by the winged leopard with four heads. And from this point of view, what would be the meaning of the ten horns? We are told that these are the ten kings of Syria who succeeded one another, from the time of Alexander to that of Antiochus Epiphanes, in which the author himself lived. But we know that Syria had only seven kings before Antiochus Epiphanes—Seleucus Nicator, Antiochus Soter, Antiochus Theos, Seleucus Callinicus, Seleucus Ceraunus, Antiochus the Great, and Seleucus Philopator. That is true, it will be answered, but there are three men who *might have* reigned, and whom Antiochus Epiphanes kept from the throne: Heliodorus, the poisoner of Epiphanes's predecessor, who did actually reign for a moment; Demetrius, the legitimate successor, who was kept at Rome as a hostage; and Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, who had claims upon the throne of Syria. But could sovereigns only by right, or by desire, be counted among real kings, and numbered among the active horns of the fourth beast? Besides, why should the Grecian monarchy be thus confined to the family of the Seleucidae? Did it not also comprehend the dynasties of Macedonia, Thrace and Egypt? To avoid these difficulties, it occurred to Zöckler to distinguish between Alexander himself, who, according to this, would be represented by the third beast, and the sum total of the states which succeeded him and which, taken together, are represented by the fourth. The ten horns only signifying the indefinite multitude of sovereigns of the four contemporaneous Grecian States. But these four Grecian kingdoms had been before evidently prefigured in the four heads of the leopard; how should they come suddenly to be reckoned as a separate beast? Besides, is it according to the analogy of the prophetic intuition to combine four dis-

tinct kingdoms into one beast? Lastly, what are we to think of the number ten, which is to represent the indefinite mass of Macedonian and Thracian sovereigns, the Ptolemies and Seleucidae? This last attempt is evidently the resource of despair. After that it becomes so much the more evident that the fourth beast, the beast without a name, represents a monarchy later than that of the Grecian power; an empire which shall comprehend the whole known world; which shall be divided into a number of states bound together by a link of solidarity (the ten horns); and which shall only give place to the kingdom of the Messiah. I leave it to the reader to decide whether these characteristics apply to the Roman monarchy or not.

But what are we to think of the connection between the little horn of chap. 7, which comes forth from this fourth beast, and the little horn of chap. 8, which belongs to the ram, the emblem of the Grecian empire? I see no reason why they should be identified. A little horn signifies in Daniel the concentration and explosion of the evil forces inherent in an organism. The third monarchy, according to chap. 8, was to produce an excrescence of this kind; and everything proves that this figure applies to Antiochus Epiphanes, the furious enemy of the Jews, of their religion, and of their God. The fourth and last monarchy, according to chap. 7, is to terminate also in the appearance of an analogous and still more destructive power. That which distinguishes it clearly from the other is the fact that it issues from the *midst* of the ten horns of the nameless beast (7:8, 24), while the former comes forth from the *four* horns of the he-goat, which typifies the king of Grecia (8:9, 21). We should say, then, to use the language of the New Testament, that the little horn of chap. 7 is *Antichrist*, the *man of sin* (Paul), the *beast* of the Apocalypse (John), that power inimical to God and the Church, which will arise from the confederation of the European States, springing from the fourth monarchy; while that of chap. 8 represents Antiochus Epiphanes springing from the Grecian monarchy, who waged a corresponding war against the kingdom of God under the form of the Jewish theocracy.

There are then two declared adversaries of the kingdom of God indicated in the Book of Daniel—one issuing from the third monarchy, attacking the people of the ancient covenant; the other from the fourth, making war against that of the new. If any one will read from this point of view chaps. 7 and 8 of the Book of

Daniel, he will find that the difficulties will vanish which have led learned men into the forced interpretations we have just refuted. *Goulet*.

The prophecies of the second part (chaps. 8-12) conclude with the death of Antiochus; those of the first part (chaps. 2-7) with the overthrow of the power of the world by the kingdom of the Messiah. Daniel himself marked the two divisions very distinctly by writing the first in Chaldee (chaps. 2-7) and the second (chaps. 8-12), as well as the introduction (chap. 1), in Hebrew. In the first part he used the language of the worldly power under which he lived; in the second, he used that of the people of God. Thus he signified that, in the one place, it was the history of the powers of the world; in the other, the history awaiting the people of God, which formed the centre of his prophecy. This accounts, simply and naturally, for the change of language.

Those who impugn the genuineness of our book are, in the first place, unable to account for the circumstance of the two dialects in general; and, secondly, for their occurrence in these definite chapters. From the time of the Exile the Chaldee-Aramaic dialect became more and more general among the Jews, and, in the age of the Maccabees, was the prevalent language. An interpolator would certainly have written the whole book in the holy language of the ancient prophets, in Hebrew. But, if he wished to write any portion in Aramaic, in order to be more easily understood by his contemporaries, he would much more naturally have chosen the second rather than the first part of the book for this purpose, as it had much more immediate and distinct reference to his own time, and was much more intended to influence the generation then living. But the distinct line of demarcation, which the change from one language to the other draws between the two parts, is of still greater importance. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in the second chapter, is recorded in a perfectly historical shape, and has a parallel, in the second dream, of the same thing narrated in the fourth chapter. And if the seventh chapter, containing the first of Daniel's own visions, were joined to the second part, it would give some confirmation to the view, according to which this, as well as the other visions of the prophet, refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, and this would naturally affect also the interpretation of the second chapter, so that the four monarchies would be regarded as extending only to Antiochus. But the author himself has removed all grounds for such an hypothesis by writing the seventh

chapter in Chaldee, and thus clearly indicating that it belongs to the first part. He thus shows, in a manner not to be mistaken, the method of his book—how it consists of two parts, different both in form and contents.

A glance at the passages in chaps. 7 and 8 shows that all the preceding and subsequent elements in connection with the little horn are different in the two chapters, and that consequently the two horns cannot be identical. After the overthrow of the little horn in chap. 7, the kingdom of the Messiah follows; in chap. 8 it is not succeeded by anything.

In the seventh chapter we find ten horns, from between which the little horn arises; and in the eighth verse four, and the little horn arises from *one* of them. Thus, not only the number of the preceding horns is different, but also the relation in which the little horn stands to them; in the seventh chapter an independent eleventh horn, in the eighth not an independent fifth, but a new horn, which, with its branches, arises out of one of the four existing, and thus belongs and is annexed to it.

Still more striking and startling is the contrast between the beasts of the seventh and eighth chapters, which, according to the modern view, must be proved identical. Can the light, fleet he-goat, who flies over the whole face of the earth without touching the ground, be identical with the terrible fourth form, which devours and breaks in pieces the whole earth, and for whose terrible and exceeding dreadful appearance the prophet cannot find a corresponding beast (7: 7, 19, 23)? Let him who is determined and is able, believe it. Does not the he-goat rather remind the reader at once of the leopard of the seventh chapter?

Turning now in the eighth chapter from the he-goat to the ram preceding it, we find it interpreted in the twentieth verse, to mean the Medo-Persian kingdom. What corresponds to it in the seventh chapter? According to our opponent's view, the bear stands for the Median, and the leopard for the Persian kingdom. Accordingly, in chap. 8 the ram represents in one shape what is analyzed in chap. 7 into bear and leopard. This does not seem probable from the context; and, *a priori*, we should be inclined to prefer an explanation which avoids such a startling difference between two adjoining chapters, and does not require us to separate in the one what is joined in the other. We naturally expect and presuppose that the same harmony shall subsist between chaps. 7 and 8 as we found to exist between chaps. 2 and 7. But even if this were not the case, it would be

more natural to expect the reverse of what modern criticism finds—viz., that the eighth chapter, being more circumstantial than the general and extensive seventh, should contain in minuter analysis what the other represents in compendious unity.

Leaving this, however, out of consideration, it can be shown that it is quite arbitrary to separate the Median kingdom from the Persian, and that our book knows as little about a special Median universal monarchy as the rest of history. History is totally ignorant of such a kingdom, and thus the prophet is made to commit a great historical error in speaking of a Median kingdom as having possessed the same universal historical importance as the Babylonian, the Persian and Grecian. This universal monarchy is not the invention of Daniel, but solely of the commentators, to rescue them out from their difficulty, and enable them to enumerate four world kingdoms besides the Roman. The prophet speaks, both in the historical and prophetic portions, of the kingdoms of the Medes and Persians as of one whole (8 : 20 ; 5 : 28 ; 6 : 8, 12, 15) : it is this kingdom, and not a Median, which succeeds the Babylonian (5 : 28). The first king of this kingdom is Darius the Median (6 : 1 ; 9 : 1 ; 11 : 1) ; the second is Kores, or Cyrus the Persian (6 : 28). But because from Cyrus onward, the rulers on the Medo-Persian throne were Persians only, it is naturally spoken of subsequently as the *Persian* kingdom (10 : 1, 13, 20 ; 11 : 2). Daniel not only speaks nowhere of a separate Median kingdom, but even under the reign of Darius the kingdom is designated as that of the Medes and Persians (6 : 8, 12, 15). This is the state of things as shown by exegesis ; and it is clear to the very weakest intelligence that in the whole of our prophet, from first to last, there is no vestige of a Median universal monarchy. The fiction was repeated by one modern critic after another, none being able to propose a bet-

ter expedient, and after passing through so many books, this theory shared the fate of other modern learned myths and attained to historical authority.

Thus we see that the separate enumeration of a Median universal monarchy and a Persian, which is the basis of the whole modern interpretation of the second and seventh chapters, is in every respect untenable. It is incompatible with the whole Book of Daniel, and with history ; moreover, the analogy of the eighth chapter is against it. This overthrows the view taken by modern criticism of the four world kingdoms as a whole ; for this separate enumeration of Persia and Media being impossible, simple arithmetical reasons compel us to look for a fourth monarchy besides the Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Grecian. If we compare the seventh and eighth chapters accurately we shall advance from this merely negative result. Such a comparison points out unmistakably that the ram is identical with the bear, the he-goat with the leopard. And since the ram is expressly explained to be the Medo-Persian, and the he-goat the Greek empire (8 : 20, 21), it is clear how we must interpret the bear and the leopard.

This, then, is the result of our investigation. Daniel himself furnishes us with more minute particulars concerning the second and third monarchy in the eighth chapter, and refutes by them all those interpretations which do not understand the former to be the Medo-Persian kingdom, the latter that of Alexander and his successors, including, according to chap. 8 : 20, Antiochus. To interpret the second and third kingdoms in the seventh chapters, and, consequently, also in the second in any other way, one must ignore intentionally the statements of the eighth chapter. But this shows clearly that the fourth monarchy is subsequent to Antiochus, and points out the Roman empire. *Aubertin.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTER VIII.

8 : 1 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even 2 unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in the vision : now it was so, that when I saw, I was in Shushan the palace, which is in the province of 3 Elam ; and I saw in the vision, and I was by the river Ulai. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns : and the two 4 horns were high ; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw

the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward ; and no beasts could stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand ; but he did according to his will, and magnified himself. And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west over the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground : and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had the two horns, which I saw standing before the river, and ran upon him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns ; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him : but he cast him down to the ground, and trampled upon him ; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. And the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly : and when he was strong, the great horn was broken ; and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven ; and some of the host and of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. Yea, it magnified itself, even to the prince of the host ; and it took away from him the continual burnt offering, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression ; and it cast down truth to the ground, and it did its pleasure and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking ; and another holy one said unto that certain one which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, and the transgression that maketh desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot ? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings ; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it ; and, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood ; and when he came, I was affrighted, and fell upon my face : but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man ; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end. Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground : but he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation : for it belongeth to the appointed time of the end. The ram which thou sawest that had the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough he-goat is the king of Greece : and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. And as for that which was broken, in the place whereof four stood up, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power ; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and do his pleasure : and he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people. And through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand ; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall he destroy many : he shall also stand up against the prince of princes ; but he shall be broken without hand.

And the vision of the evenings and mornings which hath been told is true : but shut thou up the vision ; for it belongeth to many days to come. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days ; then I rose up, and did the king's business ; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

## SECOND PART OF THE BOOK.

### CHAPTERS 8-12.

*The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World in their more Immediate Future.*

THE first part of our book (chaps. 2-7) throws a prophetic light over the whole future, as far even as that remote time when the people of God shall form a visible kingdom on the earth.

But this lies in a far-off distance ; the very first of the four world-monarchies was yet in existence. Israel, therefore, must now receive disclosures concerning the events which more immediately await them ; and it was particularly necessary that special prophecies should be given to the people of God for the times then approaching—the five centuries between the Exile and the Advent—since it was a period during which they would be given up for a



prey to the Gentiles, and in which salvation would not be fully manifested to comfort their hearts. These disclosures are contained in the second part of Daniel. We find here, also, two visions which correspond with one another, one beginning, the other concluding this portion of the book (chaps. 8 and 10-12). Between them is inserted the ninth chapter, which reveals the future of the Messiah, and the people of the covenant at the end of the half-millennium, in relation to those images of the world. *Auberlen*.

**Chap. 8.** About two years had elapsed between the vision of chap. 7 and that of this chapter. The Medo-Persian was at the gates of Babylon, and the catastrophe which Daniel announced was impending though unsuspected. The prophet knew that the doom of the Babylonian kingdom was pronounced, though *how* destruction should follow was still undeclared. In this vision "seen at Shushan," the Babylonian dynasty is left behind; the prophet at that city was brought close to the monarchy destined to rise upon the ruins of that which it superseded. What will be the fate of this second kingdom? was to such a mind as Daniel's, thoughtful, inquiring, and far-seeing—the mind of an inspired seer and of a veteran politician—no improbable question. That question God was pleased to answer. He revealed to him the wars between Persia and Grecia (verses 20, 21), which Daniel would never actually see; and, carrying the revelation farther than had yet been given, drew His prophet onward to a time when earthly kingdoms and wars should yield to Divine powers, and peace forever follow. It is not surprising that the dim outlines in which these last thoughts were shadowed out should have been felt insufficient by the prophet. He brooded over the subject again and again, till later on (10-12) the revelation was renewed, and in clearer, more emphatic language. B. C.

This chapter comprises one entire vision with its explanation—the third in the series of Daniel's four prophecies. It is naturally divided into three parts, of which the first is purely symbolic—the ram with two horns; the he-goat with his great horn; the four that came up subsequently, and the little one (verses 1-9). The second part shades off from the symbol of the horn to the conception of a king, and gives his doings (verses 9-14). The third comprises the manner of giving the explanation, and the explanation itself (verses 15-27). It is proposed to comment upon the words and clauses, to educe their exact sense; and

then to inquire more fully into the prophetic significance of the little horn—this being the only thing in this vision upon which commentators have disagreed. II. C.

**1, 2.** *In the third year.* We have no scriptural account of the accession of Belshazzar; that of his father (Nabonadius) is dated B.C. 506. The vision took place in the last year of his reign. B. C.

"I was at Shushan, *in the palace*." (Cf. verse 27.) "I rose up, and did the king's business." The date in verse 1, "the third year of King Belshazzar," is evidently the last unfinished year of his reign. P. S.

**3-5.** Under the image of a ram and a he-goat the destinies of Medo Persia and of Grecia (verses 20, 21) are set forth. Such symbolical representations as winged beasts with one and two horns with ram's and goat's heads are found on Persian gems and cylinders. The special distinctions between the Medo-Persian and the Græco-Macedonian empires underlie the selections of the ram and the he-goat. Both powers were remarkable for their strength and warlike prowess; both animals have ever been accounted remarkable for their pugnacity and courage, confronting their foes at the head of their flocks. The *common* purpose of "the bear and the leopard" (7: 5, 6)—the lust of power and gain of dominion—is once more pressed under a new symbolism; national dissimilarities are kept out of sight. As Daniel "saw in a vision," the two horns were not seen arising from their earliest stage, but from that point of growth when the horn which had come up last—the Persian which came into prominence after the Median—became the "higher" of the two. It was an accurate representation of the development of the *two* branches of *one* kingdom which the history of Cyrus exhibits. B. C.

**4.** *I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward.* Daniel saw "the ram standing," or established in his strength, after the succession of the Persian power under Cyrus; and then butting "westward, and northward, and southward," or subduing Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt, with their dependencies, represented in the former vision by three ribs in the bear's mouth. *Dr. Hales*.

**5.** The "he-goat" is explained to be "the first king" of Grecia (verse 21). Just such a he-goat may still be seen on the sculptures at Persepolis with one "notable" horn between his eyes (Vaux, "Persia"). The mode of his coming—"not touching the ground"—recalls the swift flight-like motion of the winged

"leopard" (7: 6), and is an indirect testimony to the prophetic identification of the two "beasts." B. C.

He came "from the west," for Europe lies westward of Asia; he came "on the face of the whole earth," carrying everything before him in all the three parts of the world then known, "and he touched not the ground;" alluding to the swiftness of his marches and the rapidity of his conquests. For the same reason the same empire in the former vision was likened to a "leopard," which is a swift, nimble animal; and, to denote the greater quickness and impetuosity, to "a leopard with four wings." *Bp. Newton*.—No compend of history could draw the outline of Alexander's conquest of Asia better than this prophetic vision has done it. A "rough" personage to deal with as a foe; coming from the west; sweeping the breadth of the whole land; seeming for the rapidity of his movements not to touch the earth (like the leopard with four wings, chap. 7: 6), and with one notable horn between his eyes—a horn specially *noticeable* and the prominent feature in this new power—such is the description, and such was Alexander and his Grecian kingdom. Yet still the decisive evidence of identity is the explicit affirmation of the revealing angel (verse 21). H. C.

6. If this chapter had contained a prophecy "post eventum," and had been written by a pseudo-Daniel, the representation in the text would probably have been altered in accordance with the more common opinion current in the last two centuries before Christ. B. C.

6, 7. *Standing before the river.* The first and principal engagement in which Alexander overthrew the Persians was at the river Granicus, in Phrygia. The succeeding part of this description is a striking representation of his conquering the Persian monarch in repeated battles, subduing his whole kingdom, taking all his forts and strong cities, making the king himself, with his family, principal officers, etc., prisoners, and thus utterly overturning the Persian empire. *Bp. Newton*.

7. "There was no power in the ram to stand before" the he-goat. That truth found its last fulfilment when even the intricacies of the mountain-passes and the inclemency of the time of year (December) were of no avail to protect Darius at "Susu by the river of Ulai." The last of the Persian kings, "cast down to the ground," "stamped upon," finding "none to deliver him," fled to Bessos and Barsaentes, the satraps of Bactria and Arachosia, only to meet with death by assassination. When Alex-

ander reached the spot which Mordtmann has identified with the modern Daulétâbâd, Darius was no more. Retributive justice had overtaken that empire which had once claimed greatness and power as peculiarly its own. (Cf. verses 4 and 7; and for the historical details, Grote, "History of Greece," xii. 7; Rawlinson, "A. M.," iii. chap. 7.) B. C.

Thus with fewest words, but words full of force, Daniel gives in prophetic anticipation the history of the fall of Persia before the arms of Alexander. Profane history verifies every point most perfectly. Greece had long been nursing her revenge for the invasion of her soil by Xerxes. Alexander had the energy and the ambition to lead her vigorous armies to this retaliation. He came against the ram "in the fury of his power." The last vision (11: 2, 3) touches Xerxes and then glances from him to Alexander, as if the spirit of inspiration grasped perfectly the springs of human action which threw Greece upon Asia and made her one of the great conquering powers of the East. It is well-known history that the Medo-Persian armies, become effeminate through luxury, had no power to stand before Alexander and his Grecian forces. He used up the armed hosts of Persia with amazing rapidity. Twelve years sufficed him to master not Persia alone, but Tyre, Egypt and all the East, even deeper into India itself than the ancient powers of Western Asia or of Europe ever went before or after. H. C.

8. *When he was strong.* The expression is intended to point out, with the following words, that *the great horn was broken* at a time when it was at its fullest power. The death of Alexander, B.C. 323, at the early age of thirty-two, after a career of unparalleled conquest, was truly a "breaking" not only of the horn itself, but also of "his kingdom" (11: 4), and reference is intended here to that event. B. C.

After Alexander's return to Babylon, which he proposed to make the seat of his empire, and while busily engaged in preparations for future conquest and a lasting dominion, he was unexpectedly removed by a fever. "Ambassadors from Southern Greece now came to present Alexander with golden crowns; and these, on advancing to his presence, appeared in the sacred garlands, which were never worn by deputies except when commissioned to consult oracles or to carry gifts to the shrines of distant deities. But while these servile republicans hailed him with Divine honors; while the bravest and best disciplined army on the face

of the earth loved him as their leader and revered him as their king; while his newly created fleet was furrowing with unwonted keels the bosom of the Euphrates and preparing to spread its sails on seas unknown; while he was anticipating the fulfilment of his early dreams of becoming the master of the gold, the aromatics, the myrrh and the frankincense of the hitherto untouched Sabæa, and of compelling the sons of the desert to add a third god to their scanty Pantheon; while he was preparing to forge the last link of the golden chain which was to bind together his subjects on the Indus, the Tigris and the Nile by the strong ties of mutual advantages, the scene was suddenly changed, and he was cut down in the prime of life, in the height of his glory and in the middle of his vast projects." How strikingly verified was the prophetic record, and how affectingly impressive to contemplate is the termination of that extraordinary conqueror whom the world calls "Great!" *P. A. Cor.*

He was succeeded in the throne by his natural brother, Philip Arrideus, and by his own two sons, Alexander Ægus and Hercules; but in the space of about fifteen years they were all murdered. The royal family being thus extinct, the governors of provinces, who had usurped the power, assumed the title of kings, and, by the defeat and death of Antigonus in the battle of Ipsus, they were reduced to four, Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus, who parted Alexander's dominions among them, and divided and settled them into four kingdoms. These four kingdoms are the four notable horns, which came up in the room of the first great horn, and are the same as the four heads of the leopard in the former vision. "Four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power;" they were to be kingdoms of Greeks, not of Alexander's own family, but only of his nation; and neither were they to be equal to him in power and dominion—an empire united is certainly more powerful than the same empire divided, and the whole is greater than any of the parts. They were likewise to extend "toward the four winds of heaven;" and in the partition of the empire Cassander held Macedon and Greece and the western parts; Lysimachus had Thrace, Bithynia, and the northern regions; Ptolemy possessed Egypt and the southern countries; and Seleucus obtained Syria and the eastward provinces. Thus were they divided "toward the four winds of heaven." *Bp. Newton.*

That this great empire was cleft into four parts is a well-known fact of history. Thrace

and Macedon were the nucleus of the European and western section; Asia Minor, stretching to the Euxine and the Caspian, lay on the extreme north; Syria, north as to Palestine, pushed its empire to India, and became really the eastern and great Asiatic portion; while Egypt became the centre for the southern section. Of these four the Jews stood in close relations only to Egypt on the south and Syria on the north. Hence the other sections are at once dropped from these visions. The special exigencies of the symbol require these four kingdoms to appear first as horns, inasmuch as they spring up on account of the breaking of the great horn. Indeed, they *are* at first only kings, but ultimately they secured for themselves kingdoms. Hence they stand in the vision as horns, but in the interpretation as kingdoms. *H. C.*

**9.** The little horn is usually taken to be Antiochus Epiphanes, who sprang from "one of the notable horns"—the Seleucids. His power extended southward (Egypt), eastward (especially Armenia and Elymais), and toward the pleasant land—a mode of describing Palestine found in Jer. 3: 19, Ezek. 20: 6, 15, as well as in 11: 16, 41. *B. C.*

**10, 11.** The sense of verse 10 is that the little horn-king made war upon the people of God and destroyed some of their distinguished leaders. Verse 11 states that he dared to wage war against the God of the Jews, the Immanuel who appeared to Joshua as "the Prince of the host" (translated here "Captain," but it is the same word as here, Prince); and consequently he sacrilegiously broke up the established, divinely ordained temple sacrifices, and "cast down" the place of his manifested presence and abode. The original Hebrew, rendered, "*By him* the daily sacrifice was taken away," is peculiar. It means either that one sent forth from and by him took away the daily sacrifice; or more abstractly, that by reason of him—at his instance, one took away, etc. It is remarkable that precisely the same expression is used in stating the same fact (chap. 11: 31): "From him or at his command, a military force ('arms') shall be organized and sent forth." So I paraphrase the first clause of this verse. And this, too, is the historic fact. Antiochus Epiphanes sent his chief collector of tribute (1 Mac. 1: 29), and he seized Jerusalem and took away the daily sacrifice. *H. C.*

He took away the daily sacrifice or continual burnt offering; the morning and evening lamb which God appointed to be offered every day

upon His altar Antiochus forbade and restrained the offering of. No doubt he took away all other sacrifices, but the daily sacrifice only is mentioned because that was the chief expression of communion with God. II.

**12.** The last clause of verse 13 shows that the thing done was the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot. This was a judgment on the Jews for their sins, "by reason of transgression." Both the authors of the books of Maccabees assign the same cause, which seems to indicate a somewhat general, perhaps national, sense of the relation between their sufferings under God's judgments, and the sins for which He sent them. (See 1 Mac. 1 : 11-15, 64 ; 2 Mac. 5 : 17 ; 6 : 12.) This horn-power cast down the truth—its interests and cause—and for a time seemed to have everything his own way.

**13, 14.** Daniel hears one of the holy ones (attendant angels) speaking as if about to explain some point of the vision, when to! another of the angels led his mind to the question of *time*, asking how long that part of the vision should be which refers to the daily sacrifice and the sin that works ruin (referring to the sin brought forward in verse 12 as the cause of this judgment), and which involves giving both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot. II. C.

**13-16.** The antiquity of the belief in angels is not now disputed. The foundation of the doctrine is recognized as laid in times far anterior to the captivity of Babylon. The Hebrews had, from the earliest ages, been taught and accustomed themselves to believe in beings of a nature superior to man, messengers of the Most High, executors of His orders. Moses, it is true, gave no precise idea of their nature, nor of the rank they occupied in creation. It is not till later that a definiteness and precision are attained, unrecorded—though not perhaps unrecognized—by the legislator of Israel. In this development the prophet Daniel stands conspicuous. In his pages may be discerned the rudiments of the angelological conceptions so extensively permeating the writings of later Judaism. To him may be traced a more distinct expression of the attributes of the heavenly messengers. They are no longer agents of the Deity generally, but are classed categorically. Each has his special department, each his special functions. The chiefs, those whose part is the most active, are designated by names. The books of Tobit and the fourth of Esdras carried these conceptions farther. They developed angelology into a system, and the

heavenly host became in their hands an organized militia.

A few words will sum up the angelological teaching of the Book of Daniel. Personal appellations are there first assigned to the "ministering spirits" of the Hebrew Church. Two, named by him Gabriel and Michael, are represented as among the chiefs of the celestial hierarchy, and agents of God in behalf of man. They appear as guardians of nations. They espouse the cause of the people entrusted to them and fight their battles (10 : 13, 20). Daniel sees also in his visions "the watchers and holy ones come down from heaven;" the judgment passed upon Nebuchadnezzar is a "matter by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones" (4 : 13, 17, 23). There is no inconsistency, no contradiction between the notions of the angelic hierarchy of the Babylonian prophet and those contained in the works current before the time of the Captivity. Isaiah's splendid vision (6) depicts, nearly two centuries before the Exile, the Almighty surrounded by the six-winged seraphim. These constituted the "chief princes" of his day, and one of them by issuing forth with a message to Isaiah offers a proof of independent personality. Earlier still, the prophet Micah represents "the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left" (1 K. 22 : 19-22). Gradation and personality can only be surrendered here with the authenticity of the passage. And further back still, one who is called the "Captain" or "Prince of the host of the Lord," reveals himself to Joshua as holding a rank of archangelic pre-eminence over the celestial army. What do these instances prove but the affinity between the conception of the ancient books and that of Daniel ; just as this last exhibits doctrine identical with that of Zechariah (1 : 10, 11 ; 3 : 1 ; 6 : 5) ? B. C.

**17.** The reign of Antiochus was the last great crisis in the history of the Jews before the coming of our Lord. The conquest of Alexander had introduced the forces of Greek thought and life into the Jewish nation, which was already prepared for their operation. For more than a century and a half these forces had acted powerfully both upon the faith and upon the habits of the people ; and the time was come when an outward struggle alone could decide whether Judaism was to be merged in a rationalized paganism, or to rise not only victorious from the conflict, but more vigorous and more pure. There were many symptoms

that betokened the approaching struggle. The position which Judea occupied on the borders of the conflicting empires of Syria and Egypt, exposed equally to the open miseries of war and the treacherous favors of rival sovereigns, rendered its national condition precarious from the first, though these very circumstances were favorable to the growth of freedom. The terrible crimes by which "the wars of the north and the south" were stained must have alienated the mind of every faithful Jew from his Grecian lords, even if persecution had not been superadded from Egypt first, and then from Syria. Politically nothing was left for the people in the reign of Antiochus but independence, or the abandonment of every prophetic hope. Nor was their social position less perilous. The influence of Greek literature, of foreign travel, of extended commerce, had made itself felt in daily life. At Jerusalem the mass of the inhabitants seem to have desired to imitate the exercises of the Greeks; and a Jewish embassy attended the games of Hercules at Tyre (2 Mac. 4: 9-20). Even their religious feelings were yielding; and before the rising of the Maccabees no opposition was offered to the execution of the king's decrees. Upon the first attempt of Jason, the priests had no courage to serve at the altar, and this not so much from wilful apostasy as from a disregard to the vital principles involved in the conflict. Thus it was necessary that the final issues of a false Hellenism should be openly seen that it might be discarded forever by those who cherished the ancient faith of Israel. P. 8.

"To the time of the end belongs the vision," a phrase explained in verses 19 and 26. The vision was intended to give Daniel "understanding" about the "end" which should come after "many days," even "the last end of the indignation," when God's anger with a godless world will be revealed. It is best to take these words in their most ample sense, without at the same time excluding more partial and immediate fulfillments, such as that named by Aben Ezra, when God's indignation against His own people was felt in the days of the Greek rule and of Antiochus until the Hasmonaean "cleansed the sanctuary" (verse 14). B. C.

23. This verse explains verse 9. "Out of one of them" (*i.e.*, one of those four kingdoms) "came forth a little horn." Here the angel interpreter has it: "In the latter time of their kingdom, a king shall stand up." The horn *there* is a king *here*. It is of course assumed here that he is a king in one of those four kingdoms. The angel therefore proceeds to locate

him yet more definitely in point of time. "In the latter time of their kingdom," and "when the transgressors" (the Jews) "have filled up the measure of their sins," so that discipline and judgment from the Lord's hand must needs come to save them. This king is Antiochus Epiphanes. He fills the description in every particular; no other personage does or can. As to his point of time in the Syrian line of kings, one hundred and thirty-seven years had passed when he came to the throne; about one hundred remained after his death. Moreover, the kingdom had waned very much as compared with its extent and vigor under its founder Seleucus Nicator; and hence in this point of light might naturally be thought of as in its latter stages. As the interpreter said, "in the latter time of *their* kingdom," it is proper to note that two out of these four kingdoms had already run their course and become extinct when Antiochus ascended his throne. As a whole those kingdoms were manifestly "in their latter time." His "fierce countenance" here refers, probably, to his character—*i.e.*, to him as seen in vision with his character written on his very face, rather than as seen by merely human eyes in the flesh. It means therefore that he was ferocious, passionate, cruel. That he "should understand dark sentences," intricate matters, testifies to his resources for cunning, craft and policy, as is indicated also (verse 25): "Through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand."

24. "He shall be strong," but shall not obtain this power by legitimate means, shall not be the rightful heir to the throne. Such is the history of Antiochus. He was the youngest son of Antiochus the Great. His elder brother, Seleucus Philopator, reigned eleven years. Just before his death he sent his only son, Demetrius, to Rome as a hostage, thus exchanging and releasing his own brother, Antiochus Epiphanes, who had been there in that capacity twelve years. The king fell by poison at the hand of Heliodorus, who sought to seize the kingdom. Antiochus heard of his brother's death while at Athens on his way home, and immediately made interest with powerful foreign parties to gain the kingdom for himself, and succeeded—ungratefully displacing the real heir to the throne. He shall make fearful havoc among the nominal people of God, the Jews. So the reader of the books of the Maccabees will see. The Jewish wars commenced by him continued long after his death, in all about twenty-four years, resulting at length in the independence of the Jewish nation B.C. 143,

but at the cost of many thousands of Jewish lives.

25. "And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and in their security shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." The sense of the first clause is, that by means of cunning, keen-eyed sagacity, he will make deception work successfully toward his ends. The points made in the entire verse are—successful cunning and deceit, unbounded pride and self-esteem; destroying many suddenly, in the midst of apparent tranquillity; daring to array himself against the Almighty; and his utter fall before some superhuman hand. This king's sharp-minded sagacity has been noticed before; "understanding dark sentences." This feature of his character and his abundant and successful use of it stand out with great prominence in chap. 11: 21–32. "He comes in peaceably and obtains the kingdom by flatteries;" "works deceitfully;" "enters peaceably" (not by force of arms) "upon the fattest places of the provinces;" "forecasts devices and corrupts the wicked Jews by flatteries," etc. History shows that he obtained the kingdom by precisely such means, and also that he plied these arts in their full strength upon the Jews, drawing many of them into apostasy from their religion and from their country's cause, into co-operation with himself. "He shall have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." His supreme pride and self-esteem appear also in chap. 11. "The king shall do according to his will;" "he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god;" "regarding neither the god of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor any god, he shall magnify himself above all." History gives him the same character. That he dared to fight against the God of the Jews, even while he had sufficient means of knowing that He was the true and Almighty God, has been noted on verse 11, and stands out promi-

nently in his history as given in the books of Maccabees. It was perhaps specially manifest (as usual) in that hour which most tries men's souls—the hour of impending death. The author of second Maccabees, chap. 9, says: "Here, therefore, being plagued, he began to leave off his great pride and to come to the knowledge of himself by the scourge of God, his pain increasing every moment. And when he could not abide his own smell, he said: 'It is meet to be subject unto God, and that a man that is mortal should not proudly think of himself as if he were God.' Also in his distress and remorse, he vowed that if God would spare him, he 'would become a Jew himself and go through all the world declaring the power of God.'" This shows that he had arrayed himself against Jehovah God with his eyes open, standing up intelligently against the Prince of princes. No wonder therefore that he was suddenly "broken without hand," or, as in 11: 45, that "he came to his end with none to help him;" or yet as in 7: 26, that "the judgment did sit and they took away his dominion to consume and destroy it to the end."

26. This vision is spoken of as "the vision of the evening and the morning," with reference to the use of this phrase in the Hebrew of verse 14—"twenty-three hundred evening morning." There can be no doubt that "the vision of the evening and the morning" in this verse 26 is the vision of this eighth chapter, especially that part of it in which this phrase occurs, and which shows how long the little horn shall tread down "the sanctuary" and the sacramental "host." The direction "to shut up this vision" indicates that its time of more special interest and value to its readers was yet somewhat remote. When this day of trial should come, those heroic men and women who fell martyrs to the faith of their fathers, or who fought with lion-hearted courage and prowess against fearful odds, would read these visions and dwell on these predictions of the fall of their great foe with surpassing interest. H. C.

## DANIEL, CHAPTER IX.

9:1 IN the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was 2 made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by the books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the 3 prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. And

I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from thy precepts and from thy judgments: neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses; for we have rebelled against him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even turning aside, that they should not obey thy voice: therefore hath the curse been poured out upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God; for we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet have we not intreated the favour of the Lord our God, that we should turn from our iniquities, and have discernment in thy truth. Therefore hath the Lord watched over the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth, and we have not obeyed his voice. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, let thine anger and thy fury, I pray thee, be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are round about us. Now therefore, O our God, hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not; for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he instructed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to make thee skilful of understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision. Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and his end shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator.

**Chap. 9.** Daniel, having read in the prophecies of Jeremiah that God would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem, set himself to seek God with fasting and the garb of mourning. His prayer and confession on this occasion forms a model of all such supplications. It was answered by the mission of the angel Gabriel, who now appears for the first time as the special herald of God's purposes. He comes to Daniel to announce the beginning of the period, the close of which he proclaimed to Zacharias. His message constitutes the celebrated *prophecy of the seventy weeks*, the leading idea of which, regarded as an answer to Daniel's prayer, seems to be that God would mercifully recompense His people for their captivity at Babylon by a new possession of their land for seven times that period, until the whole history of the nation should be crowned and its religious institutions finished by the advent and sacrifice of Messiah the prince. P. S.

This chapter has a subject of its own, complete in itself, and not connected with the two that precede or the three that follow. Its place here in the order of the chapters of this book is determined by its *date*. It is here because it was written after the eighth (probably not more than one year after), and four years before chaps. 10-12. Its occasion is given definitely. Daniel had learned by reading the prophecies of Jeremiah that the Captivity was limited to seventy years (Jer. 25 : 11, 12). This period was now near its close. It was this circumstance that moved him to seek the face of the Lord with such earnest prayer that He would most fully and freely forgive the sins of his people ; rightly judging that as the Captivity was sent upon the people in judgment for their sins, it could cease only upon condition of the most humble confession and repentance on the part of the people and their free forgiveness on the part of God. In this point of light, the whole chapter yields the richest moral instruction, and legitimately awakens the deepest interest. It is indeed an admirable model of intercessory prayer, and may be applied equally to prayer for guilty nations or for guilty individuals. In the spirit of one whose heart is full of sympathy with God and His glory, his great burden is the people's sins. Hence his prayer scarcely touches any other point than this one—that the Lord in His great mercy would forgive the people and wholly put away their transgressions for His name's sake. With this point distinctly in mind, the reader will readily see the entire fitness of the answer

which comes by the hand of Gabriel from the loving heart of God. It stands in the last four verses, and constitutes one of the richest promises ever made to our lost world. It is essentially the promise of an atoning Messiah, whose violent death should provide amply for the free and full pardon of sin, and for the mission of the Spirit to seal these blessings to "many." It fixes the date of His coming, the duration of His public labors on earth, the time of His death, and of those striking effusions of the Spirit which were designed to open and illustrate the genius of the Gospel age. The chapter is therefore properly in two parts : (1) Daniel's prayer that God would forgive the sins of his people (verses 1-19) ; (2) the sending of Gabriel with the answer and the answer itself (verses 20-27). H. C.

He poured out his heart in ardent supplication before the God of the Covenant, and cried to Him to vouchsafe His mercy to the people who were called by His name, and to restore the sanctuary and the city. This is one of those biblical prayers where we feel that it is not by human exposition that we can enter into its meaning, depth, and significance, but that the words must explain themselves in our own hearts. Daniel, the just and faithful servant of God, enters so deeply into the guilt and sin of his people, in the consciousness of his priesthood he identifies himself so entirely with it, he repents so heartily in the name of all Israel, that we feel here a presentiment, as it were, of what happened in the inner sanctuary of the atoning substitution, and our view is borne aloft from the chamber of Daniel to the prayerful sacrifice of Gethsemane and Golgotha. And can this prayer, which it is not possible to read without deep emotion in the very heart of hearts, be a deception ? It only shows how much our criticism is devoid of a deep and earnest sense for religious truth and truthfulness, when to such questions it attaches so little importance.

The answer naturally refers to the question, the favor shown to the petition offered ; though the Divine answer extends far beyond the human question, and the Divine favor transcends all that we can think and pray for. We must enter vividly and fully into the thoughts and feelings which form the basis of Daniel's prayer, in order to understand as far as possible the words of the angel. Daniel prays for the liberation of Israel, and for the rebuilding of the city and the sanctuary. He prays for this manifestly in view of those great promises whose fulfilment was connected with this event.



For in all the prophets, especially in Jeremiah, who is more especially present to his mind (Jer. 31), the fulfilment of the Messianic hope was inseparably connected with this restoration. The revelation which Daniel himself had received in the second and seventh chapters showed him doubtless that the Messianic kingdom was not so immediately near, in its glory at least, since but one of the four universal monarchies had passed away. But this made it the more necessary that some explanation should be granted him concerning the prophecies of the earlier prophets, in whom he saw an intimate connection between the deliverance from captivity and the Messianic salvation. The revelation now vouchsafed to him has for its purpose to analyze into its successive parts that which the prophets, according to the law of prophetic perspective, have hitherto seen together in one—viz., the redemption from captivity and the full Messianic redemption. *Aubrien.*

1. The name Ahasuerus was a common name with the kings of Media and Persia. Daniel understood "by books," in this case the written prophecies of Jeremiah, already incorporated into the canons of the Jewish Scriptures.

2. **Seventy years.** The original word means in its singular number, a seven—a heptad; and this may be a seven of days or a seven of years; the feminine plural is currently used for heptads of days; the masculine plural (which we have here) never by itself for the common week of days, but when a week of days is meant, the word *days* is appended, as in Dan. 10:2, 3; after a word and a special form of a word which simply suggests the idea of a seven—a seven of something we must ask—a seven of what? and must look for our answer in the context—in the thought already before the mind. In the present case, there can be no doubt that this thought is, the seventy *years* of captivity. Then seventy sevens of *years* must be the sense of this phrase, and it involves no usage of the word day to mean year—no usage of any current notations of time in a way to need multiplying by three hundred and sixty to get the actual time.

So far as Bible history gives us the fulfilment of Bible prophecy in which notations of time are involved, the *usus loquendi* proves that words in prophecy denoting *time* are used in their common, normal sense, and never in the enigmatical, peculiar way affirmed by "the year for a day theory." H. C.—This exposition is a plain inference from the whole bearing of the prophecy, that the *sevens* spoken

of are *sevens of years*; just as the word *Sabbath* is often used for the *Sabbatic year*. In fact, the phrase seems best interpreted as seventy cycles of Sabbatic years, or four hundred and ninety years. P. S.

3-19. The prayer has two principal divisions as pointed out by Melancthon. Daniel confesses the sins of his people and the justice of God's punishment (verses 4-14); then he implores God's pardon (verses 15-19). "It is a sign of true contrition to recognize the anger of God against our sins, to sorrow for our offences against Him, to give Him glory for the justice of our punishment, and to be obedient when punished. But the practice of contrition is attended with this reward—consolation. By his example the prophet teaches us to seek and expect pardon on account of God's mercy and promises." Of these two chief divisions the former has the following subdivision: verses 4-10 are a statement confessing chiefly the sins of his people as they were in Daniel's own time; verses 11-14 add with sorrow that thus it had been in the long past, and that the punishment had fallen only to be forgotten. The prayer should be compared with those in Ezra 9:6-15; Neh. 1:5-11; 9:6-38. The similarities of diction are not due to imitation or to plagiarism, but to a natural and insensible reproduction of the old truths and phrases loved by all devout spirits in common. B. C.

Loyalty to the Babylonian or Persian throne did not make impossible a passionate love of fatherland. Through all the long years of absence, crowded as they had been with those temptations to forgetfulness which ever assail greatness, the windows of the soul had never ceased to be open "toward Jerusalem." If any would know the habitual sentiments of Daniel's mind and heart, he has only to turn to the very words of his great confession and prayer. In him we see the loftiest patriotism consecrated by religion. *Pusey.*

It was concern for his country that moved him to that day of solemn prayer and fasting which brought Gabriel down with an answer. To an enlightened man the cause of his country will be bound up with the cause of God and of religion, as it can be well with the former only as it is so with the latter. This was especially the case with Daniel, whose country God had made and called His own, and whose city, Jerusalem, was God's holy mountain, the city of the great King, who had chosen it for the place of His special worship. That country was now in desolation, and Jerusalem with its tem-

ple was in ruins. God's worship there had been brought to an end. Sin on the part of the people had brought the desolating foe that had put a stop to their solemn feasts. Provoked to anger by their continued rebellion and apostasy, the Lord had "caused the solemn feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and had despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest. The Lord had cast off His altar; he had abhorred His sanctuary; He had given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces" (Lam. 2: 6, 7). This was the burden that pressed upon the heart of the beloved prophet. The cause of his people, and with that the cause of God and of true religion, which was bound up with it, was his deep sorrow, and drove him to incessant prayer as the time of the promised deliverance drew nigh. He was concerned not only for his country's peace, but for his people's repentance, which must be at the foundation of it. It was this that led him, as a true patriot, to pour out his heart before God in fervent prayer and deep humiliation. *Amos.*

**3-6.** This language is beautifully expressive of true prayer: "I set my face unto the Lord God to seek," etc. So true prayer turns one's thought and desire to the Lord; looks to Him for blessings. Prayer makes direct application to God, bearing its petition at once to Him and laying its case before His throne. In harmony with his state of mind, and as fitly expressive of his genuine humility of soul, he fasted, put on sackcloth, and cast ashes on his head and garments. He says, "I prayed and made my confession." Personally Daniel had not worshipped idols, had not cast off the fear of God, had not involved himself in those great sins for which these judgments were sent on the Jewish city and nation, and yet he does not stand upon his exemption from these gross sins. Yet how far Daniel was conscious of heart-sins before God, lying in this direction, none of us can say, nor how much this confession was due to his intensely strong sympathy with his people, of such sort as *seems* to create a positive identity of conduct and culpability as well as of suffering and punishment. However this may be, this case of Daniel suggests that there is little danger that the holiest of men will confess too much in reference to their own personal sins. While Daniel thought of God as great and greatly to be feared, he did not forget that He evermore "kept covenant and mercy to them that love Him and keep His commandments." This sustained his hope. God had shown great mercy in condescending ever to enter into cove-

nant with His people. His past mercy is good for present faith. The reader will observe that Daniel said, "Keeping *the* covenant." The Hebrew has it also, "*the* mercy," with manifest reference to the special covenant and the special mercy which God had made and shown to His Hebrew people. Upon this great fact Daniel's faith took strong hold in this hour of his need. In verse 5 the repetition is peculiarly expressive. As one whose soul is full of the thought, Daniel groups together nearly or quite all the different words known to the Hebrew language conveying the idea of sinning. This sin was greatly aggravated by the fact that God had sent His prophets to rebuke the people and forewarn them of impending judgments, but they had not hearkened to His voice in these warnings.

**7-10.** There is great force as well as fitness and beauty in the antithesis between the righteousness and the mercies that belong to God, and the shame and the sin that belong to His people. God had been all right; they, all wrong. On God's side had been ever abounding mercies and forgivenesses; on their side, only perpetual rebellion and most ungrateful, abusive sinning. Alas, that human life should almost perpetually bear precisely this record as toward God!—that the millions live on and sin on just so; their course toward God, perpetual sinning; His bearing toward them, the most amazing patience, forbearance, long-suffering, forgiveness and mercy, that seem to flow from a vast outgushing fountain, as if they could not cease! And if His hand has sometimes turned to judgment we must still say, "Righteousness belongeth unto Thee, O God, forever!"

**11-14.** The central thought in these verses is that God has been righteously visiting upon the nation the very judgments He had threatened against them in the law of Moses for precisely these sins of which they had been so greatly guilty. The reader will find these passages in their impressive fulness in Lev. 26: 14-46 and in De. chaps. 28-31. It is there declared most distinctly that for such sins God would send them into captivity in a foreign land, and would lay their city and homes desolate. Now Daniel recognizes the entire fulfillment of those fearful threatenings.

**15-17.** The tone in these verses is that of imploring entreaty; importunate prayer for pardon, resting mainly on the pleas that God delights in great mercies; that He has shown the nation such mercies in delivering them from Egypt; and that the honor of His name

is implicated before the nations of the earth since they are His covenant people, now for a long time in the bonds of captivity, nationally eclipsed, and according to the ideas of idolatrous nations, a standing reproach to the God they worship as being unable to redeem and save them. H. C.

**16.** Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent, and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer. Daniel first searched out the promise, what God had engaged Himself to do for His people, as also when the date of this promise expired; and when, by meditation and study upon it, he had raised his heart to a firm belief thereof, then he sets upon God with a holy violence in prayer, and presseth Him close, not only as a merciful God, but righteous also, to remember them now the bond of His promise was coming out, "O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem." The mightier any is in the Word, the more mighty he will be in prayer. *Gurnall*.

**18. For Thy great mercies.** This is the ground of his plea with God. He implores Him to listen, to open His eyes and look on the desolations of His people and of the city upon both which He had called His own name. He begs that God will not defer, but will grant him an answer of peace and mercy now. Such importunity may sometimes startle us as unbecoming and almost irreverent. But when it is the spontaneous utterance of a heart in deep sympathy with the honor and cause of God; when it comes of taking firm hold of His great love and of His unfailing promises; when one falls into it, being sweetly and mightily drawn by the Spirit of God Himself, then nothing can be more pleasing to Him. He lets us come very near to Him to "order our cause before Him and to fill our mouth with arguments." H. C.

**20-27.** We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and Gospel grace that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning star, this was the daybreak to the Son of righteousness; the day spring from on high. H.

Daniel seeks to be enlightened about the seventy years which, according to the prophecy

of Jeremiah (chaps. 25 and 29), were to be the duration of the Babylonian captivity (verses 1-3); and after he had offered up to God a fervent confession of his sins, and an ardent supplication for his people, this enlightenment was vouchsafed to him through the angel Gabriel, in the celebrated prophecy of the seventy weeks. The powers of the world recede quite out of view. Israel and the promise of salvation given to it are the exclusive subject of this revelation; for it was natural, if not necessary, that the fulfilment of these promises, according to the previous predictions of the prophet, should be expected after the end of the Captivity. And thus this prophecy refers to the redemption and to the Person who brings it, the Messiah. It announces that His coming will not be immediately after the Captivity; but that, dating from the restoration and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, seven times seventy years must yet elapse. Nor would He even then come in His glory, as Daniel might have been led to expect, from the language of the earlier prophets, or even from the revelation he had himself received (chap. 7). He would be put to death; but thereby He would work out the atonement for sin, and confirm the covenant with many. The people of Israel, however, would, as a nation, reject Him, and then be itself rejected, and Jerusalem, with its temple, would be destroyed and remain a desolation, till the consummation determined by God.

The first part of Daniel exhibited the final victory of the Messianic kingdom over all the powers of the world; the second predicted the heavy calamities and temptations which the powers of the world threatened to Israel in the more immediate future; to complete the picture, the prophet received disclosures when and how salvation was to appear in that future. The first part treats of the last days, in which the coming of the Messianic kingdom coincides with the downfall of the hostile world power; both these events are, consequently and necessarily, viewed together in one vision, as well as in the seventh chapter as in the second. This cannot be the case in the prophecy of the more immediate future. The first coming of Christ in the flesh is not immediately connected with the appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes; the two events, therefore, are kept separate in the prophecy. The Messianic prophecy of the ninth chapter takes its independent place between the two visions that refer to the Old Testament antichrist, as a word of comfort for "the wise." But there were no more special

disclosures required for the time between Antiochus and Christ. For, during that period, there occurred no trial like that prepared through Epiphanes. On the contrary, the Maccabean reaction against the tyrant kindled anew the zeal of the people for the religion of their fathers; and history teaches us that from that time the Jews adhered to the law with ever-increasing tenacity. Christ and antichrist, as they are the theme of the first, so they are also the theme of the second part of the book.

If the correct view of the seventy weeks is no other than that ancient one which has prevailed in the Church, modern criticism has received a death blow on the purely exegetical field. The chief support which that criticism derives for its hypothesis concerning our book, the hypothesis, —viz., that it extends no further than to Antiochus Epiphanes, is undermined. Whether this accurate chronological prophecy was given two hundred or six hundred years before its fulfilment, whether under Antiochus or under Darius, its miraculous character is not affected. *Huberlen.*

**21.** While he was speaking with such fervor and ardency the angel came to him with a gracious answer. It was about the time of the evening oblation. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but, it should seem, the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it, and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of their hands, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in His sight as the evening sacrifice. The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice that Daniel's prayer was accepted, when he prayed for the Lord's sake; and for the sake of that, this glorious discovery of redeeming love was made to him; the Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of His own blood. This answer was not given him in a dream or by a voice from heaven, but, for the greater certainty and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in a human shape to give this answer to Daniel. *II.*

**21-23.** "Good prayers," says an old English divine, "never come weeping home. I am sure I shall receive either what I ask or what I should ask." Such a habit of feeling as this will give to prayer that quality which Dr. Chalmers observed as being the charac-

teristic of the prayers of Doddridge—that they had an intensely "business-like" spirit. Observe how thoroughly this spirit is infused into the scriptural representation of the interior working of prayer in the counsels of God, respecting the prophet Daniel. The narrative is intelligible to a child; yet scarcely another passage in the Bible is so remarkable in its bearing upon the difficulties which our minds often generate out of the mystery of prayer. Almost the very mechanism of the plan of God, by which this invisible power enters into the execution of His decrees, is here laid open. "While I was speaking," the prophet says, "Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me, and said, 'O Daniel, at the beginning of thy supplication the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved.'" What greater vividness could be given to the reality of prayer, even to its occult operation upon the Divine decrees? No sooner do the words of supplication pass out from the lips, than the command is given to one of the presence-angels, "Go thou;" and he flies swiftly to the prostrate suppliant, and touches him bodily, and talks with him audibly, and assures him that his desire is given to him. *Phelps.*

**23.** "For thou art greatly beloved;" in the Hebrew "a man of delights"—i.e., as to God. It is a most affecting thought that mortals may by grace come into a state of holiness in heart and life, in which God can feel complacency toward them and testify to His great love for them. Who would not aspire toward such holiness and such favor with God as infinitely before all things else? *II. C.*—Daniel is assured by the heavenly messenger, "Thou art greatly beloved," for which reason he was selected as the depository of these prophetic revelations. The estimation in which he was held by successive potentates, the public honors he received, the eminent rank he held, all fade into nothingness before this testimony from heaven—a testimony founded on no external glory, but on a character invulnerable to reproaches, and formed of all the elements of pure religion. *E. J. Cor.*

**24-27.** I paraphrase thus: "Seventy sevens of years, equal to four hundred and ninety years, are cut off from the course of future time, for thy people and thy holy city, at the end of which provision shall be made for the full pardon of sin and for putting it utterly out of My sight, as a thing shut up, sealed and covered; and to bring in a system of everlasting righteousness whereby pardoned sinners

may both be accounted and may become righteous before me. This, by amply fulfilling, will close up those visions of the prophets which respect the Messiah to come. Then will I anoint My Church, the spiritual temple of the new dispensation, with the gracious unction of the Holy Ghost. This in general. I will now repeat and give more particulars. Know, then, and consider, that from the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes for restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem unto the public ministry of Messiah, the prince, shall be forty-nine years and four hundred and thirty-four years—*i.e.*, forty-nine up to the point of completing the rebuilding of the city, and four hundred and thirty-four from that point till the Messiah shall appear before the public, to commence his Gospel ministry. This city shall be restored and rebuilt; the thing is settled in the counsels of the Almighty, and shall be done, although in times of much distress. After the four hundred and thirty-four years shall have expired the Messiah shall be cut off by a violent death; His relationship to His ancient covenant people will cease; they will reject Him, and He will abandon them to their righteous doom. Then the people of the Roman prince, coming from afar, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; its end shall be with that sweeping flood of ruin; even till the end of this war, there is a Divine decree for desolations. During one heptad of years the covenant of God's mercy shall become effective to many: at the middle point of this heptad He will make sacrifice and offering cease by becoming Himself the one great atoning sacrifice, complete thenceforth and forever, and superseding all the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual. Then down upon the summit of the temple, now an abomination before God for the apostasy of those that worship therein, comes the desolator, the Roman legions—even until a complete, terrible, and predestined destruction shall have been poured forth upon the desolate city." H. C.

The events which preceded and followed the coming and sufferings of the Messiah, having been so punctually fulfilled, afford a double confirmation of His being the very same Person prophesied of, and afterward crucified; nor can they with any probability of truth be applied to any other. So that we may well say, This is the clearest and most express prediction in the whole Bible concerning the time of His coming and death. *Wogan*.—Sir Isaac Newton justly represents this illustrious prophecy as the foundation of the Christian religion. *Dr. Hales*.—And Archbishop Secker has recorded

the declaration of a writer upon "the weeks," that "if he had hitherto lived an infidel, the conviction wrought in him by a just consideration of the certain sense and perfect completion of this Divine oracle was so full that he should think it his duty to do and suffer all that was possible for human nature, supported by Divine grace, rather than forfeit his faith." *Wattle*.

**21.** *To make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.* The first clause is the technical expression for atonement (*e.g.*, Lev. 5:8; 19:22; Ps. 65:4; 78:38), and is coupled with the second as cause and effect, or as the negative and positive aspects of the Messianic mercies of God. The words "transgression," "sin," and "iniquity," so often repeated by Daniel in penitence, are thus repeated to him in mercy, as if to assure him emphatically that God would put them away as though they had not been. *Pasey*.

The Levitical word for atonement, a cover for sins to hide them from view, gives us the central thought of the passage—one which stands in the closest connection with Daniel's prayer. No point stands out so prominently and strongly in this prayer as the distress and solicitude he feels in respect to the great sins of his people. The agonizing solicitude of his heart centres upon this one question: How can this sin be removed? How can the Lord pass over and forgive it so that the people can again come under His mercy and favor? It was therefore to meet precisely this main point of his distress and anxiety that the Lord replies: After seventy heptads of years I will bring forth a perfect provision to atone for sin. Then it will be seen how I can honorably and safely forgive the penitent sinner and restore him to favor. "To bring in everlasting righteousness," is only another form of stating the same thing. The sinner forgiven and his sins all covered stands right before God. Christ is made of God unto him righteousness as well as redemption. On the ground of what Christ is, and has suffered for him, he is accounted righteous before God. This way of accounting sinners righteous is "everlasting" as contrasted with the transient duration of the Mosaic system, and the temporary effects of those frequent sacrifices required under that system, which indeed were only typical at best, and "could never with those sacrifices which they offered, year by year, make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb 10:1). This new system is to stand through all time, and its blessed

effects will be enduring. "To seal up vision and prophet" is the literal rendering of the original, and obviously refers to the fulfilment, and hence, in this sense, to the closing up of those prophecies which for many ages had predicted the Messiah, but which, having now done their work of ministry to the faith of God's waiting people, may be considered as sealed up and laid aside—superseded by the Messiah's actual coming. II. C.

25. The advent of the Messiah would not be immediately after the Exile, as Daniel had hoped, and thus coincide with the restoration of the people and the rebuilding of the city; but  $7$  and  $62 = 69$  prophetic weeks were previously to elapse. Within this time Jerusalem is to be restored and rebuilt, not indeed in that Messianic and Divine splendor as was prophesied, for example, by Isaiah (54:11; 60-62), but only in an earthly, external, and humble manner, with streets and trenches. It will be a troublesome time, better than the Exile, but yet by far less rich in grace and salvation than the Messianic time. "Thus the prophet's eye was turned away from the end of the Exile and fixed on the end of the sixty-ninth week as the time of the Messiah's coming. He is not to regard the time preceding that advent; he is not to set his heart and hope upon it. For the fate of the people and city, which fills him with solicitude, is entirely dependent on the position they will take in reference to the Messiah. And, therefore, in the two following verses there is such emphatic prominence given to the life and fate of the Messiah, while the fate of the city and sanctuary is mentioned only in the second half of the verses, and in dependent connection with the former. *Außerleben*."

*Unto the Messiah the Prince.* That is, until the awful period when the business of His life should be finished; until His hour was come, when He was to glorify His father, or when He was to be cut off by a voluntary suffering for the sins of all mankind, and thereby triumph as a prince over death, and over all His and our enemies. All the circumstances of His life are omitted, or rather comprehended in this final event when all things that were written of Him were accomplished. *Wille*.

26. By symbolic numbers he taught with extraordinary clearness when the Messiah was to come. The day of His advent is no longer indefinite, or only approximately fixed; it is exactly declared. But with what bitter revelations is it combined! What must have been the Jew's feelings when, instead of triumph

and victory, and an era of glorious conquest and universal empire, he read that Messiah was to be cut off, and that the armies of an alien empire would destroy the city and the sanctuary! that the daily sacrifice would cease, and that the abomination that maketh desolate would prevail for 1390 days! R. P. S.

We are told, verse 25, that the coming of the Messiah was to be at the end of the sixty-second week, which therefore could not be marked also by His death. Nay, His death, as we see in verse 27, is half a week after, and the destruction is much later still. The meaning of the angel therefore is: You must give up not only the hope that the Messiah will come immediately after the Captivity, but also that other expectation, that immediately after His coming He will establish His kingdom of glory. It will be quite otherwise. Messiah will be put to death by the unbelieving people, and therefore they will not attain to glory and power, but, with the city and the sanctuary, will be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. This is the view vouchsafed to Israel as a people into the more immediate Messianic future. *Außerleben*.

The Messiah must be cut off, must die a violent death, and so be cut off from the land of the living, as was foretold Isa. 53:8. Hence, when Paul preaches the death of Christ, he says that he preached nothing but what the prophets said should come (Acts 26:22, 23). And thus it behooved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for Himself, not for any sin of His own; but, as Caiaphas prophesied, He must die for the people—in our stead and for our good; not for any advantage of His own; the glory He purchased for Himself was no more than the glory He had before (John 17:4, 5). No, it was to atone for our sins and to purchase life for us that He was cut off.

27. He must confirm the covenant with many. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace; since it was become impossible for us to be saved by a covenant of innocence. This covenant He shall confirm by His doctrine and miracles, by His death and resurrection, by the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the seals of the New Testament, assuring us that God is willing to accept of us upon Gospel terms. His death made His testament of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed by it. He confirmed it to the many, to the common people; the poor were evangelized when the rulers and Pharisees believed

not on Him. Or He confirmed it with many, with the Gentile world. The New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish Church, but was committed to all nations; Christ gave His life a ransom for many.

He must cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease: by offering Himself a sacrifice once for all, He shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices; shall supersede them and set them aside; when the substance is come, the shadows shall be done away. He causes all the peace offerings to cease when He has made peace by the blood of His cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of His Gospel to the world, with which the apostles were intrusted, He took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The apostle to the Hebrews shows what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession. II.

**Abominations.** The Romans, after they had set the temple on fire, placed the idolatrous ensigns of their army over against the eastern gate of the temple, and offered sacrifice to them, as Josephus expressly tells us. The word "abominations" is commonly used for idols. (See 1 K. 11:5, 7; 2 K. 23:13.) And the "abomination of desolation," set upon the altar by Antiochus (1 Mac. 1:54), is explained by the idol altar (verse 59). So the "abominations" here spoken of properly signify the ensigns or standards of the Roman legions; each standard having stamped upon it the image of the tutelar god to which the legion offered sacrifice. W. Lorth.

**24-27.** The decree of desolation, the *destruction* of "the city and of the sanctuary by the people of the prince that shall come," cannot apply to the time of the Maccabees, since the temple was not then *destroyed*, but only profaned.

The chronology offers, under such interpretation, insuperable difficulties. Seventy weeks make 490 years; now the return from the Captivity having taken place in 536, and the murder of Onias in 170 B.C., there are between these two events 366, not 490 years. The historic period would then be too short, if compared with the number indicated.

We are told in answer that we are not to take as the starting-point of this period the return from the Captivity and the restoration of Jerusalem, but the year in which Jeremiah uttered the oracle which foretold these events—*i.e.*, the year

605—the date of that remarkable prophecy (Jer. 25). From 605-170 there are in fact 434 years, which make up the 62 weeks of which Daniel speaks (9:26). But, in the first place, when mention is made in Dan. 9:25 of "the commandment given to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem," is it natural to understand by that the oracle of Jeremiah with regard to this restoration? Do not these expressions refer more naturally to the famous edict of Cyrus, which gives permission to the Jews to return to their own country and to rebuild their city, or, better still, to the Divine command which Cyrus executed? The edict took effect in the very same year in which it was issued: it is then between the restoration in 536, and the second destruction announced (verse 26) that we must place the interval indicated. In this way the prophecy will include, as it very naturally would, the whole duration of the state of things which was established at the restoration, the whole time of the existence of the second Jerusalem and the second temple. Then next, the number in Daniel amounts not only to 62, but to 69 weeks, if not even to 70. Where are we to find the seven weeks which are left over, even according to this interpretation already devised on purpose to make room for this theory? For, lastly, between the oracle of Jeremiah (605) and the murder of Onias (170) there are only 434 years (62 weeks), and not 483 years (69 weeks). Here begin the *tour de forces*: (a) Hitzig and others include the awkward period of the seven weeks in that of the 62, placing it at the beginning of the latter. This would then be the half century which elapsed between the ruin of Jerusalem in 588 (or 586) and the appearance of Cyrus (in 536). But how is this? When it is said: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks, . . . and after threescore and two weeks the Anointed shall be cut off," it is allowable to suppose that the author intended to include the seven weeks within the 62! And if this sleight of hand (pardon the expression) should be allowed, still how are we, even adopting that method of interpretation, to find the total number of *seventy* weeks mentioned in verse 24: "Seventy weeks are determined upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city." The seven weeks cannot find room in the 62. For it is evident that the number 70 comprehends: 1. The group of the seven; 2. That of the 62; 3. The final week. Consequently these groups are successive, not contemporaneous. (b) Delitzsch and Hofmann, coming

into direct collision with the order indicated by Daniel, place the seven weeks *at the end* of the 62!—they are to represent the interval between Antiochus Epiphanes and Jesus Christ. But who will agree to such an overturning of the text? Besides, between Antiochus and Jesus Christ there was an interval of 164 years—not 49! (c) Ewald has devised another expedient. The number 69 or 70 being evidently too large in all the interpretations which apply the prophecy to the time of the Maccabees, this author has proposed to deduct from the entire number all the Sabbatical years—*i.e.*, one in seven, giving as his reason that this whole period is a time of oppression, while the idea of the Sabbath always carries with it a feeling of joy. Thus we should have (1) the seven weeks between the destruction of Jerusalem and the edict of Cyrus (587–538, according to Ewald's chronology); (2) the 70 weeks between the return from the Captivity and the year 175, when מן "anointed one" was cut off (this anointed one being, according to Ewald, not Onias, but Seleucus Philopator, who died in 174, at the time when he was invading Judea). These 62 weeks added to the seven (49 years) would bring us to the year B.C. 105, instead of 175. But to help out this calculation comes in the deduction of the 70 sabbatical years, which brings the ship prosperously to the desired haven—175. What are we to say of such monstrosities of exegesis! We will not urge all the other improbabilities to which this interpretation of the learned writer is exposed.

And these are the explanations over which one hears exclamations of triumph, as if the Messianic application of this wonderful prophecy had been completely and deservedly refuted by modern science! These attempts, so evidently vain, constitute the most complete demonstration possible of the absolute impossibility, according to any impartial exegesis, of applying this prophetic cycle of the 70 weeks to any other period than that which elapsed between the restoration of Jerusalem and the advent of the Christ—of Him who, as Daniel says, "is to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy" (9 : 24). *Godet*.

The twenty-fourth verse belongs to the most profound and glorious passages in the Old Testament; and if anywhere these have a Messianic signification, it is here. The angel

wishes at first to give the prophet the general impression that his hopes and prayers for the Messiah will be fulfilled in a much later period than he expected. The 70 years of exile were indeed, as he had confessed in his prayer, a punishment for the sins of the people, yet not a perfect satisfaction for them before God. God would certainly visit Israel with His redeeming mercy, but the full atonement and forgiveness of sin, the eternal and everlasting restoration of the normal state between God and sinners (righteousness), would come only after 70 prophetic weeks. The sacrifice by which this atonement for sin would be made is pointed out in the twenty-sixth verse by the expression, "Messiah shall be cut off;" with this also is connected the expression in the twenty-seventh verse, "He shall confirm the covenant with many," and the prophecy, that the sacrifices of the Old Testament, both with and without blood ("sacrifice and oblation"), shall cease. Thus the angel presents to the prophet in these expressions a connected chain, each link of which bears, upholds and explains the other, and which, taken aggregately, represents the Messiah as the perfect sin-offering of the covenant.

Finally, to take a brief survey of the entire prophecy, the prophet has indeed received strength and consolation only for the near future, which was the special object of his intercessory prayer. It is true that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and that the people will be permitted to return from the Captivity; but this restoration is merely temporary, and is succeeded by many centuries of affliction. For the more distant future, Daniel receives, on the one hand, a consolatory disclosure concerning the appearance of the Messiah, who brings unto many the full salvation of the new covenant; but, on the other hand, disclosures concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary, because Israel rejects its Messiah, and which must affect Him deeply and painfully. The restoration of Jerusalem will not, therefore, be of long continuance, but, on the contrary, a new exile is to be expected. Yet, for the far distant time, the angel does not leave the prophet without a ray of hope for Israel and Jerusalem. Thus he received in some measure the consolation he had sought in his prayer regarding the future of his people. Gabriel begins the twenty-fourth verse with exceedingly precious promises, and from behind the dark clouds of night which cover the horizon, a glimmering ray of light shines through in blessed presentiment. *Auberlen*.



*Recapitulation of the Chapter.*

Daniel knew that Jeremiah had fixed seventy years as the length of the duration of the Exile. But the date from which to calculate was not determined; for there had been several deportations. Daniel, however, could not doubt that the end must be near; and his prayer was at that very time hastening on the desired event. Gabriel, the interpreter of the Divine mercies, appears to him and announces that the return is indeed very near, but that that event will by no means coincide, as Israel imagines, with the coming of the Messiah. God's people have still long and grievous periods to go through, before they will reach the goal so impatiently expected. The heavenly messenger, in the first place, marks out distinctly the whole of the period which is to intervene between the return from the Captivity and the coming of Christ. It was to be a vast cycle of seventy weeks of years; exactly seven times as long as the Captivity had lasted; as if God wished to say to His people: "Add to that long period of exile seven times its own length, and you will have an idea of the length of the interval which still separates you from the moment which you think so near." These six expressions, of which the first three describe the complete abolition of sin, the three last the perfect realization of righteousness on the earth, can only relate to the *consummation* of the Divine work—the time of the Messiah. Seven times seventy years—that is to say, four hundred and ninety years, or about five centuries—such, to speak generally, is the measure of the cycle which comprehends the remainder of the history of Israel between the return from the Captivity and the kingdom of God. We know that the edict of Cyrus was issued in the year B.C. 536. There is, then, evidently an approximative coincidence between the prophetic cycle and the historic period which answers to it. After this first summary statement, the general cycle is subdivided (verses 25-27) into three subordinate periods. The first is reckoned at *seven weeks*—that is, forty-nine years, or very nearly half a century. This number stands for the period of the *restoration*—that is to say, the time of the rebuilding of the temple, of the holy city, and of its walls. The second subdivision is *sixty-two weeks*, four hundred and thirty-four years, about four centuries and a half. This number has no special value of its own. It is merely the result of the subtraction of the numbers of the first and third subdivisions from that of the total period.

It is the measure of the time of *maintenance* of the restored people, of that long state of almost constant warfare for Israel during the great political convulsions which followed the national restoration. The third subdivision only includes *one single week*, seven years; this is the *closing* period, the time of the advent and work of the Messiah; the number seven marks the peculiar sacredness of this final period. In the midst of this notable week the Messiah disappears; for one part of the nation the covenant is confirmed and renewed by His death; but for the mass of the people, sacrifice is forever abolished, and that final ruin decreed which was to be consummated by a foreign invasion. It is evident that here we are dealing with vast cycles, like those with which the mind of Daniel had been familiarized by his astronomical studies. Revelation adapts itself to the conceptions of those who are to be its organs. But we must not expect history to bind itself slavishly to the exactness of those mathematical definitions of which the laws are of a different kind. History is the domain of human liberty; it cannot be controlled by the rhythm of the sacred numbers, three, seven, and ten. *Goulet.*

We have here a most remarkable prophecy, delivered above five hundred years before the event, which, besides what it declares of the Messiah's salvation, as finishing transgression, and introducing the everlasting righteousness, contains a variety of most important circumstances, all future at the time when Daniel wrote. The following public facts are expressly noted. The commandment to build the city. The building of it. The character of the times during which this was to take place. The coming of the Messiah. The time that was to elapse after the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon till His appearance. The express application of the term Messiah, which is the same as Christ. His dying a violent death: He shall be *cut off, but not for Himself*—that is to say, not for His sins, but for the sins of men. His making atonement for sin. His putting an end to the legal sacrifices. His introducing the everlasting righteousness. The closing up of prophecy. Its consummation, in His confirmation of it with many who should accede to it. The destruction of the city and temple. The signal nature of that destruction. The times when all these things should take place specified in their distinct periods. All this received an exact accomplishment. The commandment to build the city was given to Ezra by Artaxerxes in the

seventh year of his reign, and is recorded in the Book of Ezra, and the building of the city was effected. At the set time Jesus Christ, pointed out as the Messiah by a variety of other prophecies, appeared. He was put to death, yet many became His disciples, with whom He confirmed His covenant. The time of the law and the prophets came to an end ; and the legal sacrifices lost their obligation and efficacy. Soon after, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed as by an inundation. The sacrifices then ceased to be offered, even in form. From that day to the present the Jews have been anxiously desirous to renew them ; but Jerusalem being the only place where these could be offered, and it having been ever since in the hands of their enemies, this has been totally out of their power. *Edwards.*

## DANIEL, CHAPTERS X., XI. 1.

**10 : 1** In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar ; and the thing was true, even a great warfare : and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three whole weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel, I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz : his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision : for the men that were with me saw not the vision ; but a great quaking fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me : for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words : and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground. And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright ; for unto thee am I now sent : and when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel ; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard : and I am come for thy words' sake. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days : but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me : and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days : for the vision is yet for many days. And when he had spoken unto me according to these words, I set my face toward the ground, and was dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips : then I opened my mouth, and spake and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by reason of the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I retain no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord ? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither was there breath left in me. Then there touched me again one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. And he said, O man greatly beloved, fear not : peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he spake unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak : for thou hast strengthened me. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I am come unto thee ? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia : and when I go forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will tell thee that which is inscribed in the writing of truth : and there is none that holdeth with me against these, but Michael your **11 : 1** prince. And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

**Chaps. 10-12** form a section of themselves. They occupy the position naturally assigned to them by their date (10: 1) and by their contents; in the latter point being a development of the prophecies contained in chaps. 8 and 9. The section may be conveniently divided into three parts: the first, an introduction (10: 1; 11: 1) giving details of the circumstances connected with the vision and the mode of its communication; the second (11: 2-45), the revelation of leading events in the history of the great southern and northern powers, and of the Old Testament Antichrist; the third (12), the victory and deliverance of God's people in Messianic times; accompanied by some words of comfort specially applicable to Daniel himself.

The revelation—like those in chaps. 7 and 8—is communicated to the prophet by an angel. The vision itself is not one of monster beasts or of ram and goat, but of a "man;" the description of whom is given in language which recalls the language used in the description of the Ancient of Days (7: 9). B. C.

The vision of the eighth chapter is described more fully and circumstantially in the second revelation, contained in chaps. 10-12. These chapters bear the same relation to the eighth as the seventh to the second. The prophecy itself is contained in the eleventh chapter, the tenth forming the prologue, the twelfth the epilogue.

The tenth chapter is as peculiar a phenomenon in Holy Scripture as the eleventh, and these two remarkable phenomena, unique in their kind, are connected not only outwardly, but also inwardly. Their relation to each other is that of the future and the invisible. It strengthened and elevated the people of God to be permitted to view the future in a prophecy during their heavy afflictions; but it was equally strengthening and elevating for them to have their eye directed to the mighty champions and allies which they possessed in the world of spirits. As Paul excites the Ephesians to an earnest struggle against sin, by reminding them that they have to "wrestle not with flesh and blood alone, but with principalities and powers," so Daniel was commanded to inspire his people with courage and perseverance in their struggle with the world, by showing them that principalities and powers also are leagued against the world in its opposition to God. *Anburen*.

**Chap. 10.** This entire chapter is introductory to the fourth and last of the visions, the vision proper occupying the two remaining

chapters. This introduction is very full on the points of the prophet's overwhelming agitation, grief and physical prostration; the renewed ministries of his revealing angel to comfort and strengthen him; certain remarkable yet little known conflicts between the angel-guardians of the Jews and other angels standing in perhaps analogous relations toward other kingdoms—coupled with several intimations that the matters to be revealed relate to long and grievous wars, some of which would befall Daniel's people in future years.

**1.** The third year of Cyrus is the latest known date in the life of Daniel. Chap. 1: 21 states that "he continued to the first year of the reign of Cyrus;" but does not say he died then; does not deny that he lived longer. That passage may mean only that he continued so long in active public service. He is now far advanced in age, it being not far from seventy-four years since he was brought, a captive youth, from Jerusalem to Babylon. H. C.

That Daniel was still found at Babylon in the third year of Cyrus instead of returning to "the city Jerusalem, the holy mountain" (9: 16), will not be felt a serious difficulty. Daniel was very old; and the journey would have been such as few at his advanced age could have undertaken with safety. He may have felt that by remaining in exile he would be of greater service, comparatively speaking, than if he revisited the land of his fathers. Kranichfeld (p. 341) has well pointed out that had the Book of Daniel been written in the Maccabean period, the author would never have made the mistake of making Daniel so (apparently) indifferent to national and patriotic considerations. B. C.

**2, 3.** So deeply affected was he with the anticipation of these things, even before they were definitely revealed. But it should be remembered that he has had the same general subject before his mind in at least two previous visions, those of chaps. 7 and 8. In both those visions the wars to be waged by the little horn against the saints of the Most High had been the leading theme, and had manifestly impressed his mind powerfully. Now, even before the details of this vision commence, his mind again comes under the strong impression of those scenes, and the deep fountains of his grief are broken up.

**4-6.** The river Hiddekel is better known as the Tigris. The personage described here was his angel-interpreter in human form, and in his whole appearance, splendid, majestic, awe-inspiring. Of the two usual Hebrew words for

man, the one used here is that which involves most dignity. The other suggests frailty and mortality from the dust of the earth.

7. Daniel only saw the vision. His attendants did not see it, but were impressed with a sense of something supernatural, and hence were affrighted and fled to hide themselves. Similar phenomena occurred in the conversion of Saul. He heard audible words; his attendants heard a noise, but no words. The Spirit manifests Himself to whom He will. Daniel was powerfully affected. II. C.

8. Man is no better than a leaf driven by the wind, until he has conquered his lonely duties. This makes a man—the habit of confronting great things in solitude, and chiefly the habit of conversing with God alone, and of filling the soul with His strength. For, remember, the man who is a stranger to these habits of solitude is neither his own master nor the possessor of his own house. He owns a great house, a wonderful house, and an eternal house; but it is shut up and locked, and he lives outside, "until in his solitude he join God unto himself." *J. Pulsford.*

11, 12. As Gabriel touched the prophet on a former occasion (chap. 9: 21), and with a similar assurance (verse 23) of his being "greatly beloved," it has been supposed that the same angel appeared to him in this manner. It was a cheering intimation that he was heard from the first day when he devoted himself to sacred study and humiliation; and his conduct furnishes an example worthy of imitation, of diligent inquiry into the oracles of God and the mind of the Spirit. There is no part of Scripture which does not deserve and demand investigation, and he who dictated these pages will, if we seek His illuminations, guide us into the knowledge of their contents. When the angel says, "understand the words that I speak unto thee," it implies that they would not at first be obvious, but, like all important, and especially all figurative, communications respecting futurity and the government of God, would demand patient, serious and persevering research. We ought not assuredly to rest contented with a general or superficial acquaintance with Scripture, but feel it an incumbent duty to dig deep into the mines of revelation, and we shall certainly be repaid with the rich and abundant ores of heavenly wisdom. Let us remember that the profoundest humility accompanied, in the case of Daniel, the most anxious investigation, for he "set his heart to understand," and at the same time "chastened himself before God;" and let us

also remember that it is in immediate connection with this devout and inquiring spirit that he is called "greatly beloved." *F. A. Cor.*

12. Prayer brings vividly before us and it harmonizes the two worlds to which we belong—the physical world, with its unchanging and beneficent sternness; the spiritual world, with its immeasurable potencies of free activity. We, at once creatures of time and heirs of eternity, come before God as those who are made capable of such approach, and who seek to use the prerogative of our nature. We, with our imperfect estimate of righteousness, limited by outward tests, with our narrow wisdom fashioned on fragmentary experiences, with our wayward love swayed to and fro with gusts of feeling, cast ourselves upon Him who is infinite righteousness and wisdom and love. His discipline is that to which we desire to conform ourselves; His counsel is that which we in our hearts strive to serve; His compassion is that which we in our truest moments seek to reflect. So we lay all our weaknesses, all our thoughts, all our aspirations, before Him, and in that very act we know that our prayer is heard and answered, and then we can go back to our work to realize alike in failure and in success the certainty of His promise: "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall receive them." *Bp. Woodcott.*

13. The tenth chapter opens to us marvelous glimpses into the invisible spiritual world, which forms the background of the world's history. Nor is this without analogy in Holy Scripture (Job 1: 7; 2: 1, etc.; Zech. 3: 1, 2; Jude 9; Rev. 12: 7, etc.); but nowhere else are the revelations so clear and comprehensive. The general truth, that the angels are ministering organs of the Divine providence and government, is frequently, and in detail, asserted and proved by Holy Scripture, but, above all, in the two Apocalyptic books, in which the curtain that hides from us the invisible world is drawn aside. The Scriptures recognize the efficacy of angels in the whole life of nature, even in ordinary and regular natural phenomena (John 5: 4; Heb. 1: 7; Rev. 7: 1-3; 14: 8; 16: 5). And not only in nature, but in history also, for which our chapter is the classical passage. We see here individual angels standing at the head of individual kingdoms of the world; we see opposed to them, at the head of the Israelitish Theocracy, Michael, one of the first princes. In alliance with him, and opposed to the spirits of the world, there is another angel, Gabriel,

whose object is to promote the realization of God's plan of salvation in the heathen world. It is natural that this angel should be sent to reveal to Daniel the fate which the powers of the world were preparing for the people of God. He lets the prophet catch a glimpse of the invisible struggles between the princes of the angels, in which it is decided who is to exert the determining influence on the worldly monarch, whether the god-opposed spirit of this world, or the good spirit, whose aim it is to further the interests of God's kingdom. We are wont to speak in a spiritualizing way of a struggle between the good and the evil spirit in man; Holy Scripture teaches us to regard such a struggle as real and substantial. (Cf. 1 Sam. 16: 13-15; 1 K. 22: 22.) The Satanic influences of which we have more particular knowledge, through the language of Jesus and His apostles, are essentially not different from this. The liberty of human actions is not hereby taken away; for the spirits exercise no compelling influence on men's hearts. The question about the relation of the Divine government to human liberty rather loses than gains in difficulty, when we take the element of angelic ministry into consideration.

That glorious angel who appears to Daniel tells him that for twenty-one days he struggled with the angel at the head of the Persian monarchy and that finally, by Michael's help, he subdued him and obtained superiority over the Persian king. But he informed him also that he had to enter upon a further struggle with that Persian angel, and that this would be succeeded by one with the Grecian, which, as he lets him dimly see, would not, for all the help of Michael, be equally victorious. These events in the world of angels will be better understood, when viewed in connection with the revelations concerning the future which follow in the eleventh chapter. While the Persian kingdom endures, the spirit of the world power, hostile to God and His people, will be restrained and subdued, so that the Persian kings will follow the good spirit and be favorable to Israel. But with the Greek kingdom there will come a change. During its dominion the people of the covenant will have to suffer much from the wars of the Ptolemies and Seleucidæ; and it is out of this kingdom that the arch-enemy shall arise. *Aberlen.*

Three among the *archangels*, or chief among the angels, Scripture designates by name, two among the elect, one among the fallen angels. The two first are called Michael and Gabriel, names which express in human language the

offices which they fulfil in the creation of God. The meaning of the word Michael is, *Who is like unto God?* In him we behold the being who is placed at the very summit of the scale of living creatures. One thought and feeling alone absorbs him, and makes the sum of his being—that of the immeasurable distance which separates him from the Creator. Himself at the very summit of all, he feels more than all others his own nothingness. Zeal for the glory of God, whom he adores while veiling himself, is the spring of his activity, the very principle of his existence. From this feeling arises the nature of the work he has to do, which is to overthrow everything that dares to make itself equal with God, or to oppose itself to Him, paganism in particular, under all its various forms. In the Old as in the New Testament, Michael appears as the protector of Israel, and the champion of Monotheism (of which this people was the depositary), and as the vanquisher of Satan, and the destroyer of his works. This archangel thus fitly precludes the final work of the Messiah as the *Judge* of the world.

The meaning of the name Gabriel, the second archangel of light, is *the strong man*, or *God's hero*. In him we see the active executor of God's designs for the salvation of men. While Michael is occupied in overthrowing all that opposes God, Gabriel hastens the realization of His plans. It is he who appears to Daniel to announce to him the return from the captivity, and to fix the time for the still distant advent of the Messiah; it is he who, in the New Testament, announces to Mary the birth of the Saviour of the world. Gabriel is the heavenly *evangelist*; he precludes the work of the Messiah as the *Saviour* of the world.

In the end of time the relation between men and angels, first contracted at the creation, and made more intimate during their development, will be sealed by a supreme event. On the one hand, Paul says that men "will judge angels"—*i.e.*, holy men will judge the rebel angels; on the other hand, the angels will sift the tares from the wheat among mankind, garnering up the former, and burning the latter; such is the declaration of Jesus. And after each of these two classes of beings shall have thus rendered homage to the Divine holiness in the presence of the other, the end of God's dispensations to both will be realized. He who has determined to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth," will join both men and angels in one under this single Head.

That was a magnificent duet which resounded in the Church when, for the first time, the believers from among the Jews, and the converts from among the Gentiles, united their voices to sing the new song, the hymn of salvation. They both celebrated the marvellous works of God, but each in his own manner; the former praising Him above all things for His *faithfulness* in the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers; the latter publishing His *mercy* toward the people to whom He had promised nothing, but who, whatever might be their unworthiness, had notwithstanding received all. But even more rich and sublime will be the hymn with which the elect angels and glorified men will celebrate together the work of God; the former announcing the faithfulness of the Most High which so magnificently rewards their own faithfulness; the latter, in a graver tone and more restrained accent, as becomes beings whose song is born amid tears, glorifying the grace of Him who can blot out even unfaithfulness; those setting before us men, by their example, that ladder of light upon which it is possible to ascend to God without once departing from the truth, to attain to perfection not without trial but without falling, to realize progress in pure good—thus glorifying the holiness and the truth of that God who does not permit that sin should ever appear to be necessary or even in itself useful; and, on the other side, we men responding to them, and pointing in deep humility to the dark abysses of sin into which we had thrown ourselves, but from which the hand of God has drawn us by unparalleled marvels—thus glorifying in their eyes that grace which “where sin abounded did much more abound,” and which, in thus transforming even evil into good, has accomplished the greatest of all miracles. From the midst of the two races, henceforth to form but one, there will then rise that united hymn (last word of the history of free beings), of which the song of the angels and of the shepherds on Christmas Eve was the prelude: “Praise be to God and to the Lamb who sitteth upon the throne! Alleluia!” *Godt.*

**11.** This statement is of prime importance as giving a clue to the interpretation of this prophecy. It positively affirms that this prophecy (chaps. 11 and 12) relates to the fortunes of the Jews, Daniel's own people, in future times. How far down in the future cannot be definitely determined from this general expression, “in the latter days.” There are instances in which this phrase refers to the times of the Messiah,

the Gospel age of the world—*e.g.*, Isa. 2:2 and Micah 4:1. But there are also other instances in which it refers to events far less remote—*e.g.*, Gen. 49:1, which looks to the various fortunes of the tribes, mostly long prior to the Gospel age. Also Num. 24:14, the outlook of Balaam, which primarily goes not beyond the overthrow of Moab by David, II. C.

**19.** He silenced his fears and encouraged his hopes with good and comfortable words. He said unto him, Fear not, Daniel (verse 12). And again (verse 19), O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when anything had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here quieted Daniel. Those that are beloved of God have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them; God Himself speaks peace to them; and they ought upon the warrant of that to speak peace to themselves; and that peace, that joy of the Lord, will be their strength. Will God plead against us with His great power, will He take the advantage against us of our being overcome by His terror? No, but He will put strength into us (Job 23:6). So He did into Daniel here, when, by reason of the lustre of the vision, no strength of his own remained in him; and he acknowledges it. When he had spoken to me, I was strengthened. God by His word puts life and strength and spirit into His people; for if He says, Be strong, power goes along with the word. And now that Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's strengthening word and grace, he is ready for anything. “Now, let my lord speak, and I can hear it, I can hear it, and am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me.” To those that (like Daniel here) have no might, God increases strength (Isa. 40:29). And we cannot keep up our communion with God but by strength derived from Him; but when He is pleased to put strength into us, we must make a good use of it, and say, Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hears. Let God enable us to comply with His will, and then, whatever it is, we will stand complete in it. Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt. II.

**20.** The hostility toward God's people which the “prince of Persia and the prince of Grecia” showed, is illustrated historically in the opposition and hindrances endured by the Jews at Jerusalem, not only during the reigns of Darius Hystaspes, Xerxes and Artaxerxes (Ezra and

Nehem. passim), but also, if in a less degree, in that of Alexander and his successors.

**21.** The "scripture of truth" is the title for the ensuing section. It not only expresses the Divine record, whose characteristic is faithfulness and "truth," particularly in relation to religious truth and the true announcement of the future; but it is here used with an implied contrast to the records and books of Babylonia and Persia familiar to the prophet—neither imperishable nor true; and with evident reference to the "true thing" (verse 1) and "the truth" of previous visions.

**11:1.** The opening verse of chap. 11 is usually connected with 10: 21, rather than with 11: 2. The division into chaps. 10, 11, 12 is unfortunate and inconvenient. The whole sec-

tion forms one connected whole, and to be understood must be read regardless of the current divisions.

*In the first year of Darius . . . even I, stood . . . him.* The "him" is not Darius, but Michael (10: 21); literally the verse runs "my standing was to confirm," etc. There is probably an allusion to the then—"in the first year of Darius," after the fall of Babylon—uncertain position which Darius would take with regard to the people of Israel. The history of chap. 6 shows how precarious was the position of the great men of the Jewish race; here it is intimated that the angelic powers of Israel strengthened each other against the "prince of Persia." Angelic interference was exercised in behalf of Daniel (6: 22), and had continued, and would still continue. B. C.

## DANIEL, CHAPTER XL. 2-45.

2 AND now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and when he is waxed strong  
3 through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. And a mighty king  
4 shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when  
5 he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; but not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion wherewith he ruled; for  
6 his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside these. And the king of the south shall be strong, and *one* of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion;  
7 and he shall strengthen her in those times. And at the end of years they shall join themselves together; and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the strength of her arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her,  
8 and he that strengthened her in those times. But out of a shoot from her roots shall one stand up in his place, which shall come unto the army, and shall enter into the fortress of  
9 the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: and also their gods, with their molten images, *and* with their goodly vessels of silver and of gold, shall he carry  
10 captive into Egypt; and he shall refrain some years from the king of the north. And he shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but he shall return into his own land.  
11 And his sons shall war, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on, and overflaw, and pass through: and they shall return and war, even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north; and he shall set forth a great multitude, and the multitude  
12 shall be given into his hand. And the multitude shall be lifted up, and his heart shall be  
13 exalted: and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. And the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former; and he shall come on at the end of the times, *even of* years, with a great army and with much substance.  
14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the children of the violent among thy people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision; but  
15 they shall fall. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take a well fenced city: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither

16 shall there be any strength to withstand. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him : and he shall stand in the glorious land, 17 and in his hand shall be destruction. And he shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him ; and he shall do *his pleasure* : and he shall give him the daughter of women, to corrupt her ; but she shall not stand, neither be for him. 18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many : but a prince shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease ; yea, moreover, he shall cause his reproach to turn 19 upon him. Then he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land : but he shall 20 stumble and fall, and shall not be found. Then shall stand up in his place one that shall cause an exactor to pass through the glory of the kingdom : but within few days he shall be 21 destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. And in his place shall stand up a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honour of the kingdom : but he shall come in time 22 of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be swept away from before him, and shall be broken ; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully : for he shall come up, 24 and shall become strong, with a small people. In time of security shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province ; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers ; he shall scatter among them prey, and spoil, and substance : yea, he 25 shall devise his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army ; and the king of the south shall war in battle with an exceeding great and mighty army : but he shall not stand, 26 for they shall devise devices against him. Yea, they that eat of his meat shall destroy him, 27 and his army shall overflow ; and many shall fall down slain. And as for both these kings, their hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table : but it shall not 28 prosper ; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. Then shall he return into his land with great substance ; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant ; and he shall do *his* 29 *pleasure*, and return to his own land. At the time appointed he shall return, and come into 30 the south ; but it shall not be in the latter time as it was in the former. For ships of Kittim shall come against him : therefore he shall be grieved, and shall return, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do *his pleasure* : he shall even return, and have regard 31 unto them that forsake the holy covenant. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering, 32 and they shall set up the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries : but the people that know their God shall 33 be strong, and do *exploits*. And they that be wise among the people shall instruct many : yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, *many days*. Now 34 when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help : but many shall join themselves unto them with flatteries. And some of them that be wise shall fall, to refine them, and to 35 purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end : because it is yet for the time appointed. And the king shall do according to his will ; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods : and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished ; for that which is deter- 37 mined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of 38 women, nor regard any god : for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his place shall he honour the god of fortresses : and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with 39 gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. And he shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a strange god ; whosoever acknowledgeth *him* he will increase with glory : and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for 40 a price. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south contend with him : and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships : and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and 41 pass through. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown : but these shall be delivered out of his hand, Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the 42 children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries : and the land 43 of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt : and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be 44 at his steps. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him : and he



45 shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

**Chap. II.** The second part of the book is almost exclusively occupied with an account of the visions vouchsafed to Daniel. In the eleventh chapter these take the form of a communication made to him by an angel, who relates in detail, as it seems, the history of the Seleucian kings. There can be no doubt that this, in any aspect, is one of the most remarkable chapters of Scripture. If the book is not genuine, this chapter is the most audacious of forgeries; but if genuine, it can only be regarded as the most extraordinary of prophecies—in fact, it may claim to be altogether unique; and yet we can only, on the most arbitrary principles, venture to regard this chapter as an interpolation, and suppose that it warrants us in calling in question the integrity of the book. It is absolutely impossible to sever this chapter from its surroundings; it must stand or fall with the rest of the book. *Leathes*.

There is, first, a brief description of the Persian and Greek monarchies (verses 2-4); then follows a sketch of the most important struggles of the Ptolemies and Seleucidae (verses 5-20); while a detailed and circumstantial picture of Antiochus Epiphanes forms the conclusion (verses 21-45). *Aubertin*.—Like the other visions, this starts with the time then present, or rather it sets back some four or five years—*i.e.*, from the third year of Cyrus (10: 1) to the first year of Darius, his immediate predecessor, who reigned two years. The prophecy proper begins with verse 2 at the point then present: "There shall stand up *yet*," etc.—*i.e.*, after Cyrus, then on the throne. Then the course of prophetic thought in the chapter is a rapid sketch of the Persian kings to Xerxes; then by a natural transition to Alexander and his great kingdom; then its fourfold division; then the two of these four kingdoms, with which alone the Jews were concerned; Egypt on the south, and Syria on the north, running through the history of ten kings, five of the former kingdom, and five of the latter, till he reaches Antiochus Epiphanes in verse 21. He then gives *his* history through the chapter to his death (verse 45). *H. C.*

The eleventh chapter is an enlargement of the eighth. The disclosures which the latter contains about Persia and Greece, and the fourfold division of the great Greek kingdom, are only mentioned to be used as a connecting link and starting point for the prophecy, which

now unfolds the future of Egypt and Syria, the Ptolemies and Seleucidae, the kings of the south and the kings of the north. "Daniel," says Luther, "now leaves the two kingdoms of Asia and Grecia, and takes up the two of Syria and Egypt. For the Jewish country lieth between these two, and hath Syria on the north [toward midnight], and Egypt on the south [toward midday], and these two had an everlasting contest with each other. The Jews, therefore, placed thus between the door and the hinge, were sorely tormented on both sides. Now they fell a prey to Egypt, and anon to Syria, as the one kingdom or the other got the better; and they had to pay dearly for their neighborhood, as is wont to be in time of war. Specially when that impious man was king in Syria, whom histories style Antiochus the noble; he assaulted the Jews most fiercely, and raged and slaughtered like a devil among them. It was on account of this wretch and cruel villain that the vision was given, to comfort the Jews, whom he was to plague with all kinds of plagues."

It is, moreover, worthy of remark that we do not find Syria and the individual kingdoms mentioned by name, any more than Rome. As yet these kingdoms lay quite beyond the historical horizon of Daniel; the angel, therefore, could not designate them by their names. Rome was separated from Daniel by space; an independent Syrian kingdom, by time. Syria, already conquered by the Assyrians (2 K. 16: 9; Isa. 8: 4; Amos 1: 5), belonged afterward as a province to the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia and Greece successively, and was a very unimportant country in the time of Daniel. If our book had been written so late as the time of the Maccabees, it would be difficult to assign a reason why Syria is not mentioned by name as well as Greece; nay, it might be expected that Syria should be mentioned, even though Greece was not. This circumstance must be regarded as one of those minute and fine features which, because of their very insignificance and secondary position, are, to the unprejudiced student, the most eloquent witnesses for the antiquity and authenticity of a book. It cannot be maintained by our opponents that the Maccabean authors omitted to name Syria for fear of Antiochus, since country and king for that time are so minutely sketched as to be unmistakable. We lay the more stress on this circum-

stance, as Egypt, whose princes are called in opposition to the Syrian, the kings of the south or midday, is mentioned by name (verses 8, 42). For this is not only the old monarchy well known to the Israelites, but at the time Daniel received this revelation it was still an independent and even flourishing kingdom; nor was it till ten years later that it was conquered by Cambyzes and annexed to Persia. The designation, kings of the north and kings of the south, is given from Palestine being the standpoint. Of all the predictions contained in the Holy Scripture, this is doubtless the most special and minute, and in order not to be offended at this prophecy, it is necessary to believe in the omniscience and real revelation of God in the prophetic word. *Auberlen*.

2. *Behold, there shall stand up.* The angel first prophesies of the Persian empire, which was then subsisting. "There shall stand up yet," that is, after Cyrus, the founder of the empire, who was then reigning, "three kings in Persia;" these were Cambyzes, Smerdis the Magian, and Darius, the son of Hystaspes. "And the fourth shall be far richer than they all." The fourth after Cyrus was Xerxes; of whom Justin truly remarks, that his riches were so abundant, that when rivers were dried up by his army, yet his wealth remained unexhausted. "And by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all," both subjects and allies, "against the realm of Grecia." The expedition of Xerxes into Greece is one of the most memorable events in ancient history. Herodotus affirms that in raising his army he searched every place of the continent, and computes that the whole number of his armament amounted to more than five millions of men. After him no mention is here made of any other king of Persia. "It is to be noted," saith Jerome, "that the prophet, having enumerated four kings of the Persians after Cyrus, slippeth over nine, and passeth to Alexander; for the prophetic spirit did not care to follow the order of history, but only to touch upon the most famous events." Xerxes was the principal author of the long wars and inveterate hatred between the Grecians and Persians; and as he was the last king of Persia who invaded Greece, he is the last mentioned. The Grecians then in their turn invaded Asia; and Xerxes' expedition being the most memorable on one side, as Alexander's was on the other, the reigns of these two are properly connected together. *Bp. Norton*.—A farther reason may perhaps be assigned why these kings of Persia only are mentioned, because they were all that should

reign before Artaxerxes Longimanus, by whom the decree was issued, according to the prophecy of the seventy weeks, for rebuilding Jerusalem. *Windle*.

After the battle of Salamis, the centre of the world history was no more in the second, but in the third, the Grecian kingdom. *Auberlen*.

This setting up of the Grecian empire did greatly prepare the way for Christ's coming, and setting up His kingdom in the world. Besides these ways, common to the other overturnings of the world in this period, that have been already mentioned, there is one particular to this revolution which I would take notice of, which did remarkably promote the work of redemption; and that was that it made the Greek language common in the world. To have one common language understood and used through the greater part of the world was a thing that did greatly prepare the way for the setting up of Christ's kingdom. This gave advantage for spreading the Gospel from one nation to another, and so through all nations, with vastly greater ease, than if every nation had a distinct language, and did not understand each other. After the Grecian empire was set up many in all these countries well understood the same language—viz., the Greek language; which wonderfully opened the door for mutual communication between those churches, so far separated one from another. And again, the making the Greek language common through so great a part of the world, did wonderfully make way for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, because it was the language in which the New Testament was to be originally written. The apostles propagated the Gospel through many scores of nations; and if they could not have understood the Bible any otherwise than as it was translated into so many languages, it would have rendered the spreading of the Gospel vastly more difficult. But by the Greek language being made common to all, they all understood the New Testament of Jesus Christ in the language in which the apostles and evangelists originally wrote it; so that as soon as ever it was written by its original penmen, it immediately lay open to the world in a language that was commonly understood everywhere, as there was no language that was so commonly understood in the world in Christ's and the apostles' times as the Greek; the cause of which was the setting up of the Grecian empire in the world. *Edwards*.

3. *And a mighty king.* That Alexander was "a mighty king" and conqueror; that he not only "ruled with great dominion" over

Greece and the whole Persian empire, but likewise added India to his conquests ; and that he " did according to his will," no one, not even his friends, daring to contradict and oppose him, or, if they did, like Clitus and Callisthenes, paying for it with their lives, are facts too well known to require any particular proof or illustration. *Bp. Newton.*

4. His kingdom was plucked up and torn into fragments for others to enjoy besides his own family. All this is a condensed but accurate epitome of the history of those times, of which the part relating to Xerxes has been given with great minuteness by Herodotus and others ; the part borne by Alexander, by Arrian, Plutarch and Diodorus.

5. Here begins a rapid sketch of the rise of the two kingdoms, Egypt and Syria, glancing at the wars, intrigues, treaties and perfidies that fill the interval down to Antiochus Epiphanes in verse 21. All commentators of any celebrity concur precisely in their interpretation of these verses. They find the same kings, give them the same names, give the same sense to the prophecy, and find the same historic facts for its fulfilment. H. C.

Though the kingdom of Alexander was divided into four principal parts, yet only two of them are here mentioned—Egypt and Syria—partly because these two were by far the greatest and most considerable ; but more particularly because Judea, lying between them, was sometimes in the possession of the kings of Egypt and sometimes of the kings of Syria. It is in respect of their situation to Judea that they are called the kings " of the south " and " of the north." " And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes " (as the passage may be rendered after the Greek version), that is, of Alexander's princes, " shall be strong above him." The " king of the south " was indeed very " strong ; " for Ptolemy annexed Cyprus, Phœnicia, Caria, and many islands, cities and regions to Egypt ; and likewise enlarged the bounds of his empire by the acquisition of Cyrene. But still " the king of the north," or Seleucus Nicator, was " strong above him," or stronger than he ; for, having annexed the kingdoms of Macedonia and Thrace to the crown of Syria, he became master of three parts out of four of Alexander's dominions, and is represented by historians as " the conqueror of the conquerors " and " the greatest king after Alexander."

6. And in the end of years they shall join themselves together. After many years of hostility between the kings of

Egypt and Syria, Ptolemy Philadelphus, the second king of Egypt, and Antiochus Theus, the third king of Syria, agreed to make peace upon condition that Antiochus should put away his former wife, Laodice, and her two sons, and should marry Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy. " For the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make " rights or agreements ; and accordingly, Ptolemy Philadelphus brought his daughter to Antiochus Theus, and with her an immense treasure, so that he received the appellation of the dowry-giver. " But she shall not retain the power of the arm," that is, her interest and power with Antiochus ; for after some time he brought back his former wife, Laodice, with her children to court again. " Neither shall he stand, nor his arm," nor his seed ; for Laodice, fearing the fickle temper of her husband, lest he should recall Berenice, caused her husband to be poisoned ; and neither did his seed by Berenice succeed him in the kingdom, but Laodice contrived and managed matters so that her eldest son, Seleucus Callinicus, was fixed on the throne of his ancestors. " But she shall be given up ; " for Laodice, not content with poisoning her husband, caused also Berenice to be murdered. " And they that brought her"—for her Egyptian women, in endeavoring to defend her, were many of them slain with her. " And he that begat her," or rather, as it is in the margin, " he whom she had brought forth"—for the son was murdered as well as the mother, by order of Laodice.

7, 8, 9. But out of a branch of her roots. Such wickedness was not to pass unpunished and unrevenged. Out of the same " root " with Berenice sprang Ptolemy Euergetes, her brother ; who no sooner succeeded his father, Ptolemy Philadelphus, in the kingdom, than " he came with an army and entered into the fortress," or fenced cities, " of the king of the north," that is, of Seleucus Callinicus, who, with his mother Laodice, reigned in Syria ; and he " dealt," or acted, " against them, and prevailed " so far, that he took Syria, and Cilicia, and the upper parts beyond Euphrates, and almost all Asia. And when he had heard that a sedition was raised in Egypt, he plundered the kingdom of Seleucus, and took forty thousand talents of " silver," and " precious vessels," and images of their " gods " two thousand and five hundred. " So the king of the south came into the kingdom of the north, and then returned into his own land." He likewise " continued more years than the king of the north ; " for Seleucus Callinicus died in exile of a fall

from his horse, and Ptolemy Euergetes survived him about four or five years.

**10.** *But his sons shall be stirred up.* The sons of the king of the north should endeavor to vindicate and avenge the cause of their father and their country. The sons of Seleucus Callinicus were Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great. The former, who succeeded his father on the throne, was indeed "stirred up, and assembled a multitude of great forces," in order to recover his father's dominions, but was poisoned by two of his generals after an inglorious reign of two or three years. Upon his decease, his brother Antiochus was proclaimed king. The prophet's expression is very remarkable, that "his sons should be stirred up, and assemble a multitude of great forces;" but then the number is changed, and only "one should certainly come, and overflow, and pass through." Accordingly Antiochus came with a great army, retook Seleucia, and recovered Syria. Then after a truce, Antiochus "returned" and overcame in battle Nicolaus, the Egyptian general, and had thoughts of invading Egypt itself. *Bp. Newton.*

**11.** Then the king of the south, Ptolemy Philopator, greatly exasperated, rouses himself from his voluptuous lethargy, and comes forth to fight with Antiochus the Great, the king of the north; and though this king of the north had brought into the field an immense army, yet in a great battle at Raphia, near Gaza (B.C. 217), he was utterly defeated, and the power passed into the hands of Philopator, king of Egypt. *H. C.*

**12.** Ptolemy knew not how to make a proper advantage of his victory, but "his heart was lifted up" by success. Being delivered from his fears, he now more freely indulged his lusts; so that instead of being "strengthened" by his victory, he provoked even his own subjects to rebel against him. But the prophet in this passage more particularly foretold the case of his own countrymen. After the retreat of Antiochus, Ptolemy visited the cities of Coele-Syria and Palestine, which had submitted to him; and among others in his progress he came to Jerusalem. He there offered sacrifices, and was desirous of entering into the holy of holies, contrary to the custom and religion of the place, being, as the writer of Maccabees says, greatly lifted up by pride and confidence. His curiosity was restrained with great difficulty, and he departed with heavy displeasure against the whole nation of the Jews. At his return, therefore, to Alexandria, he began a cruel persecution upon the Jewish inhabitants

of that city, who had resided there from the time of Alexander, and enjoyed the privileges of the most favored citizens. "And he cast down many ten thousands;" for it appears from Eusebius, that about this time forty thousand Jews were slain, or sixty thousand, as they are reckoned in St. Jerome's Latin interpretation. No king could be "strengthened" by the loss of such a number of useful subjects. The loss of so many Jews, and the rebellion of the Egyptians, added to the maladministration of the State, must certainly very much weaken and almost totally ruin the kingdom.

**13. For the king of the north shall return.** After a peace of about fourteen years, in the course of which Ptolemy Philopator had died of intemperance, and was succeeded by his son, Ptolemy Epiphanes, a child of four or five years old, Antiochus, having acquired "great riches" and collected many forces in an eastern expedition, which enabled him to "set forth a greater multitude than the former, returned," not doubting to have an easy victory over an infant king.

**14. And in those times there shall many stand up.** Not only Antiochus rose up against young Ptolemy, but others also confederated against him. The provinces, which were before subject to Egypt, rebelled; and Egypt itself was disturbed by seditions. Philip too, the king of Macedon, entered into a league with Antiochus, to divide Ptolemy's dominions between them. "Also the robbers of thy people;" it is literally "the sons of the breakers," the sons of the revolters, the factions and refractory ones, "of thy people," the Jews, who were at that time much broken into factions. These were to "exalt themselves to establish the vision;" accordingly they revolted from Ptolemy, and thereby contributed greatly, without knowing it, to the accomplishment of this prophecy concerning the calamities which should be brought upon the Jewish nation by the succeeding kings of Syria. "But they shall fall;" for Scopas came with a powerful army from Ptolemy, and, in the absence of Antiochus, soon reduced the cities of Coele-Syria and Palestine to their former obedience.

**15, 16. So the king of the north shall come.** Antiochus, wishing to recover the cities and countries which Scopas had taken, came again into those parts, and, having defeated Scopas, pursued him to Sidon, which he closely besieged, and at length compelled to surrender. This event, probably, was principally intended by his "casting up a mount and

taking the city of munitions," as in the margin; for Sidon was an exceeding strong city, both in situation and fortifications; besides which, he took other "the most fenced cities," as in the text, as recited by the Greek and Roman historians. "The arms of the south could not withstand him, neither his chosen people;" neither Scopas, nor the other great generals, nor the choicest troops that were sent against him; but he "did according to his own will, and none" was able to "stand before him;" for he soon rendered himself master of all Coele-Syria and Palestine. Thus he "stood in the glorious land," and his power was established in Judea, "which by his hand was consumed," the Jews suffering many things, and their country being wasted during these hostilities.

**17. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom.**

Antiochus, not contented with having rent the principal provinces from Egypt, was forming schemes to invade the country itself with all his forces: "and upright ones with him," that is, the Jews, who marched under his banners, and are so called to distinguish them from the idolatrous soldiers. And so Antiochus would have seized upon Egypt by force; but, as he was meditating a war with the Romans, he judged it better to proceed by stratagem, and to carry on his designs by treaty rather than by arms. For this purpose "he shall give him the daughter of women," his daughter so called, as being one of the most eminent and beautiful of women. Accordingly Antiochus married his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy, and gave in dowry with her the provinces of Coele-Syria and Palestine, upon condition of the revenues being equally divided between the two kings. All this he transacted with a fraudulent intention to "corrupt her," and induce her to betray her husband's interests to her father. But his design did not take effect; "she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." Ptolemy and his generals were aware of his artifices, and therefore stood upon their guard; and Cleopatra herself affected more the cause of her husband than of her father; insomuch that she joined with her husband in an embassy to the Romans, to congratulate them upon their victories over her father, and to exhort them, after they had expelled him out of Greece, to prosecute the war in Asia; assuring them at the same time that the king and queen of Egypt would readily obey the commands of the Senate.

**18. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles.** Antiochus, having fitted

out a formidable fleet, "turned his face unto the isles" of the Mediterranean, subdued most of the maritime places on the coasts of Asia, Thrace, and Greece, and "took" Samos, Eubœa, and "many" other islands. This was a great indignity and "reproach offered" to the Romans, when their confederates were thus oppressed, and the cities which they had lately restored to liberty were enslaved. "But a prince," or rather "a leader, a general," meaning the Roman generals, repelled the injury, and caused his "reproach to cease." After various defeats, Antiochus and his successors became tributary to the Romans; so truly and effectually did they not only "cause the reproach offered by him to cease," but, greatly to their own honor, "caused it to turn upon him."

**19. Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land.**

After the battle that decided his fortunes, Antiochus fled away to Sardes, and thence into Syria, to Antioch, "the fort of his own land." Then marching into the eastern provinces, to collect there the arrears of tribute, and amass what treasure he could, in an attempt to plunder the rich temple of Jupiter Belus in Elymais, he was assaulted by the inhabitants of the country, and himself and all his attendants slain. Thus, by an inglorious death, he "stumbled and fell, and was no more found." *Bp. Newton.*

It is observable that during the reign of Antiochus the Great the Romans began to extend their conquests in the east, and they are by his means imperceptibly, as it were, introduced into the narration of which they make so considerable a part in the sequel. This prince in many instances favored the Jews, yet during the whole of his wars was generally the occasion of great distresses among them; and hence we have so long an account of him, from the tenth verse to the nineteenth. *Windle.*

**20. Antiochus the Great left two sons, Seleucus IV. (Philopator) and Antiochus Epiphanes.** The former succeeded him, and is described by Niebuhr as a good-natured man and a kind brother, but otherwise weak and insignificant. Under him the empire of the Seleucids fell into still greater decay. After a peaceful and insignificant reign of twelve years (B.C. 187-176) he was murdered by Heliodorus. B. C. — **Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom.** Or rather, "one that causeth an exacter to pass over the glory of the kingdom." Seleucus Philopator succeeded his father Antiochus the Great in the throne of Syria; but he

performed nothing worthy of the empire of Syria, and of his father. The tribute of a thousand talents, which he was obliged to pay annually to the Romans, was indeed a grievous burden to him and his kingdom; and he was little more than "a raiser of taxes" all his days. He was tempted even to commit sacrilege; for, being informed of the money that was deposited in the temple of Jerusalem, he sent his treasurer Heliodorus to seize it. This was literally "causing an exacter to pass over the glory of the kingdom," when he sent his treasurer to plunder that temple, which "even kings did honor and magnify with their best gifts," and where Seleucus himself, of his own revenues, bore all the costs belonging to the service of the sacrifices. "But within few days," or rather *years*, according to the prophetic style, he was destroyed; and his reign was of short duration in comparison with his father's; for he reigned only twelve years, and his father thirty seven. Or perhaps the passage may be better expounded thus: that "within few days," or "years," after his attempting to plunder the temple of Jerusalem, he should "be destroyed;" and not long after that he was "destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle," as all chronologers agree; neither in rebellion at home, nor war abroad; but by the treachery of his own treasurer Heliodorus. The same wicked hand that was the instrument of his sacrilege was also the instrument of his death. *Bp. Newton.*

**21-45.** The conclusion of the prophecy about Antiochus Epiphanes. In this passage we have, first, a description of the earliest wars of the king with Egypt (verses 21-27), then of his religious conduct, partly as it related to Israel (verses 28-35), partly viewed generally (verses 36-39), and finally of his last enterprises and his end (verses 40-45). From this general outline the reader will perceive that from the thirty-sixth verse the typical relation of Antiochus to antichrist receives great prominence. For this reason the majority of commentators have referred verses 36-45 immediately to antichrist. But Havernick has justly given up this interpretation as arbitrary; for not only are the features of Antiochus' character drawn in verses 36-39 so accurately as scarcely to be mistaken; but we find again, in verses 40-45, the opposition between north and south which runs through the chapter. *Auberlen.*—Here we arrive at Antiochus Epiphanes, in his place in the line of Syrian monarchs, and, as here described, meeting all the great facts recorded of him in history. *H. C.*

**21. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person.** Antiochus Epiphanes,

who succeeded to the kingdom, was at Athens when his brother Seleucus died by the treachery of Heliodorus; and "the honor of the kingdom was not given to him," for Heliodorus attempted to get possession of it himself; another party declared in favor of Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, whose mother, Cleopatra, was the daughter of Antiochus the Great, and sister of the late King Seleucus; and neither was Antiochus Epiphanes the right heir to the crown, but his nephew, Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, then a hostage at Rome. However, he "obtained the kingdom by flatteries." He flattered Eumenes, king of Pergamus, and Attalus, his brother, and by fair promises engaged their assistance. He flattered the Syrians, and with great show of clemency obtained their concurrence. He flattered the Romans also, and sent ambassadors to court their favor by presents and promises of fidelity. Thus he "came in peaceably;" and as he flattered the Syrians, the Syrians flattered him again, and bestowed on him the title of Epiphanes, or *the illustrious*; but the epithet of "vile," or rather "despicable," given him by the prophet, agrees better with his true character. For he disgraced himself by such profligate, low, ridiculous, and indecent conduct as induced Polybius, who was a contemporary writer, and others after him, instead of Epiphanes, or *the illustrious*, more rightly to call him Epimanes, or *the madman*.

**22.** Heliodorus, the murderer of Seleucus, and his partisans, as well as those of the king of Egypt, who had formed designs upon Syria, were vanquished by the forces of Eumenes and Attalus, and dissipated by the arrival of Antiochus, whose presence disconcerted all their measures. "The prince also of the covenant was broken," that is, the high priest of the Jews. As soon as Antiochus was seated on the throne he removed Onias from the high priesthood, and preferred Jason, the brother of Onias, to that dignity; but though he had "made a league" with Jason, the new high priest, he did not adhere to it faithfully, but acted "deceitfully;" and having deposed Jason, substituted Jason's younger brother, Menelaus, in his room. *Bp. Newton.*

**23.** Continuing the same subject, this historic prophet touches the league made between Antiochus and the apostate Jew whom he constituted high priest in place of the good Onias, and who took the Grecian name of Jason. This Jason promised to pay Antiochus large sums

for his aid in obtaining the high-priesthood and for license to set up a Grecian gymnasium in Jerusalem and to institute the Grecian idolatrous rites associated with it. For three years (B.C. 175-172) he labored assiduously to seduce the Jews into the Grecian life and religion. At length he sent his younger brother, Menelaus, to carry to Antiochus the money he had promised for his high-priesthood, when both Menelaus and Antiochus "worked deceitfully;" the former, bidding higher for the priesthood than his brother had done, the latter repudiated his previous contract with Jason and gave the priesthood to him. Thus Antiochus gained a foothold in Judea and became strong, though commencing "with a small people." This kingdom of Syria had been greatly reduced in territory and also exhausted in its finances during the two previous reigns. Hence the frequent allusions to the small beginnings of this little horn king. H. C.

**25-27.** The result of the battle which took place near Pelusium was the complete defeat of the Egyptians and the temporary subjection of the larger part of Egypt to the authority of Antiochus. Ptolemy Philometor fell into his enemy's hands, but was honorably treated; the policy of Antiochus being to cajole Philometor into believing that he was his friend, bent on supporting his authority against that of his brother, Physcon, who had a strong party in the country, especially at Alexandria. We have no full account, in any profane writer, of the history of the period; but it is quite possible that the loss of the battle of Pelusium was owing to treachery on the part of some of Philometor's ministers (verse 26); and it is certain that in the intercourse between him and Epiphanes each king was trying to deceive and overreach the other (verse 27). Nothing decisive was accomplished, however, as yet; "the end" was reserved for "the time appointed" (*ibid.*). G. R.

**28.** It was in June, B.C. 169, that Antiochus, having been entirely successful in Egypt, returned toward his own land with great riches. His return was hastened by a report that all Judea had risen in revolt from his authority. A rumor had reached Jerusalem that Antiochus was dead. Some public manifestations of joy ensued, which being reported to Antiochus with no little exaggeration, greatly exasperated him against the Jews. He hastened back with his victorious army and at once assailed and took Jerusalem. Of this terrific onslaught, the author of 2 Mac. says (5: 11-16): "Removing out of Egypt in a furious mind,

he took the city by force of arms, and commanded his men of war not to spare such as they met and to slay such as went up upon the houses. Thus there was killing of young and old, making away of men, women and children, slaying of virgins and infants. And there were destroyed within three whole days four-score thousand, whereof forty thousand were slain in the conflict; and no fewer sold than slain. Yet was he not content with this, but presumed to go into the most holy temple of all the world, Menelaus, that traitor to the laws and to his own country, being his guide; and taking the holy vessels with polluted hands, and with profane hands pulling down the things that were dedicated by other kings to the augmentation and glory and honor of the place, he gave them away." In this scene of pillage and sacrilege, Antiochus found and took away from the temple eighteen hundred talents of gold, and then offered swine's flesh on the altar and sprinkled the whole temple with the broth of this flesh. These things exasperated the Jews against him exceedingly.

**29, 30.** The third expedition of Antiochus into Egypt (B.C. 168) is not distinctly referred to, having in it nothing that specially affected the fortunes of the Jews. He went there to depose Physcon, the younger brother of Philometor, his *protégé*—the Egyptians having raised him to power because Philometor was practically under the absolute control of Antiochus. He defeated the army of Physcon in battle. Physcon and his party sought help from the Romans. The next year (B.C. 167) Antiochus made his fourth expedition into Egypt, of which these verses give the substance. The last clause of verse 29 means that this last expedition was not, like all his former, successful. "Not as the former, so is the latter." The reason of his failure was the intervention of the powerful Romans. Chittim, in its larger sense, was used for the northern and eastern islands and coasts of the Mediterranean, including Greece and Rome. There is no doubt that Rome is meant here. So Josephus and numerous other authorities affirm. An embassy of three men from the Roman Senate met him just as he was about to lay siege to Alexandria; told him they had taken young Physcon under their protection, and that he must desist or have war with Rome. Antiochus indicating a wish to procrastinate, Topilius drew a circle in the sand about his feet and said, "Give me an answer before you cross that circle." He yielded, and pledged himself to do all the Senate should require. He dared not offend the

Roman power. But he came back to vent his rage upon the Jews.

31. He now sent out an army of twenty-two thousand, under Appollonius (June, B.C. 167), who seized Jerusalem, took possession of the castle and made it a stronghold; forcibly prevented the Jews from worshipping in their temple; desecrated the altar by erecting an idol altar directly upon it, and there offering sacrifices to idols; and of course entirely superseding and suspending the daily sacrifices of the Jews. This was "the taking away of the daily sacrifice." The original word, meaning the constant, the continuous, or, rather, the regular, every-day routine, embraced really more than the morning and the evening sacrifices. It included all the services of the Mosaic ritual. The last clause, rendered, "the abomination that maketh desolate," may be translated either "the abomination that maketh desolate," or "the abomination of the desolator," the sense in either case being essentially the same—viz., that, instead of the sanctuary which was a tower of strength and symbolized the strength God gives to His obedient people, this abominable idol altar was the symbol of ruin and desolation. It was set up by a force bent on desolating the city and people of God; it was permitted of God in judgment on His apostate people; it therefore carried with it only desolation.

32. The books of Maccabees make the fact very prominent that in these times many Jews were utterly apostate from the service and worship of God. Of these, the first clause speaks. It might be rendered, "the wicked apostates of the covenant." These persons, this vile king "corrupts by his flatteries"—by his intrigues, bribes, encouragements. On the other hand, "the people who know their God," in the sense of loving and approving both Him and His service, "shall be strong." These were at first the venerable Mattathias of Modin and his sons—a most noble family, of extraordinary faith and Christian heroism. Later, the company embraced many others who joined them. No one can read their history as recorded in the first Book of Maccabees without concurring in this brief but just testimony to their transcendent heroism, valor and energy. "They were strong and they performed exploits." The zeal and courage of the aged Mattathias are inspiring. "And when he saw the blasphemies that were committed in Judea and Jerusalem, he said, Woe is me! Wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people, and of the holy city and to dwell there

when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy and the sanctuary into the hand of strangers? Her temple is become as a man without glory. Her glorious vessels are carried away into captivity, her infants are slain in the streets, her young men with the sword of the enemy. Behold, our sanctuary, even our beauty and our glory, is laid waste and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end, therefore, shall we live any longer? Then Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes and put on sackcloth and mourned very sore." When the king's officers came to Modin, and plied Mattathias with flattery and with bribes, pressing him to be the first to fulfil the king's command as all the heathen had done, he cried with a loud voice, "Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances! We will not hearken to the king's words to go from our religion, either on the right hand or on the left." "Now when he had left speaking these words, there came up a Jew in the sight of all, to sacrifice on the altar at Modin, according to the king's commandment. Which thing when Mattathias saw, he was inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to show his anger according to judgment; wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Then he cried throughout the city, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me" (1 Mac. 2: 26-27). This small but heroic band retired to the mountain fastnesses of Southern Palestine; were pursued by their persecutors, were attacked upon the Sabbath, and full one thousand of them were cut down unresisting. They would not take up arms to resist on the Sabbath, but fell saying, "Let us die in all our innocence; heaven and earth shall testify for us that ye put us to death wrongfully" (verse 37). The survivors, upon second thought, determined to defend their lives whenever attacked. Others, fleeing from persecution, came in and were a stay unto them. "So they joined their forces and smote sinful men in their anger and wicked men in their wrath; but the rest fled to the heathen for succor. Then Mattathias and his friends went round about and pulled down the altars; and what



children soever they found within the coast of Israel uncircumcised, they circumcised valiantly. They pursued also after the proud men, and the work prospered in their hand. So they recovered the law out of the hand of the Gentiles and out of the hand of kings, neither suffered they the sinner to triumph" (1 Mac. 2: 43-64). H. C.

While some "consented to the religion of Antiochus, sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the Sabbath," patriots like the sons of Mattathias, Eleazar and the "seven brothers," fought, conquered or suffered death rather than flinch from their faith. Few histories are more spirit-stirring than the history of the struggle for religious liberty and political independence fought by the "little" handful of men against the armed legions of Antiochus. From the day that Mattathias struck to the ground the Jew who had dared to sacrifice to idols, till the day when the "lion" Judas Maccabeus practically secured respect for his people by the defeat of Nicanor, the attention of the reader of the books of the Maccabees is fascinated by a "valor" which never would acknowledge defeat, by a "cheerfulness" which was inspired by prayer and the consciousness of a just cause. B. C.

**33.** This first clause might be rendered either "the wise ones among the people," or "the teachers of the people," with no great difference in the ultimate meaning. They devote themselves to teaching the people the law and the claims of God. Yet, one after another, they fall in war for many days. The venerable father Mattathias first; after him, Jonathan, Eleazar, Judas, Simon—a noble band, yet within the course of this twenty-four years' war with the Syrians they fell.

**34.** Nevertheless God aided them with a little help. The results of the war gradually worked toward their political independence, which at length (n.c. 143) they achieved. This help was small compared with that which the Lord gave His people in the days of Joshua and of David. That "many gave to them with flatteries" is a matter of history. Their cause suffered more than once from treacherous friends.

**35.** Some of their wisest and best men fell—Jonathan, Judas and others; God's purpose in this affliction being to chastise His people the more thoroughly; to make them cease from man and put their trust in the Lord alone. This is in harmony with His usual course of moral discipline in this world of trial. Such would be the state of things "to the time of

the end," until the period assigned of God for this scene of trial should close. All was "noted in His Scripture of truth" (chap. 10: 21); it should transpire accordingly. The Lord had certain ends to answer in respect to the moral discipline of His people. These scenes of conflict and trial would continue until those ends were answered.

**36-39.** By all the established laws of language, this passage must treat of the same king whose wars and whose persecutions of the saints have been the subject of remark from verse 22 onward to this point. He is *the king*—the same before spoken of, the Hebrew article being explicit testimony to this point. Further, the connection of *thought* as well as of grammatical construction is close and decisive; for this king is able to "do according to his will" only because the Lord has indignation against His apostate people, and therefore sees fit to make use of this "vile king" as the rod of His scourging and discipline. Hence he shall prosper till the indignation shall be accomplished, and the thing determined of God for chastisement and reformation shall be done. This sort of logical reference to the preceding context and to the reasons assigned in the parallel vision (chap. 8: 19) for the great power of this same vile king constitutes the strongest possible connection between "*the king*" of verse 36 and the king of the north, whose case fills the passage (chap. 11: 21-35). His character and his deeds as illustrative of character are the subject in these verses. He is proud and self-conceited; thinks himself above every god; speaks marvellous things against the God of gods—things that excite the wonder of mankind for their horrid blasphemy and pride. This is the prophecy; to which accords the history of Antiochus in the books of the Maccabees. "Having spoken very proudly" (1 Mac. 1: 24). (See also 2 Mac. 9 throughout.) In this chapter the author, commenting on his fall from his chariot, says: "Thus he who a little afore thought he might command the waves of the sea (so proud was he above the condition of man) and weigh the high mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground and carried in a horse-litter, showing unto all the manifest power of God." Throughout, the historical testimony to his pride and self-conceit is remarkably in harmony with this prophetic portrayal.

**40-45.** We paraphrase the general scope and sense of the passage thus: Having now spoken of the wars of Antiochus with Egypt; of his sacrilegious assaults upon Jerusalem and

its temple; of his persecutions of the pious Jews: of the gods he did not worship and the gods he did, it remains to sum up briefly his exploits and then record his death. His first great exploit was his terrific onslaught upon Egypt, given first in detail (verses 25-30) and then in general, as here (verse 40). Next, his invasion of "the glorious land," given in the particulars (verses 22, 23, 28, 30-35); and in the general (verses 41, 45). Next in this recapitulation, the countries that did escape—Edom, Moab, Ammon (which in fact sympathized with him and aided him in his wars against the Jews and hence did not incur his displeasure); and the countries that did not escape—Egypt, and with her the Libyans and Ethiopians, and also Palestine. Next, he was a great robber of the wealth of cities and nations. This is referred to in detail (verses 24, 28); in general statement (in verse 43). Then appears a new fact in the prophecy. In the height of these desolating conquests he was somewhat seriously diverted by uprisings against his authority in his northern and eastern provinces—a fact fitly introduced here because so closely connected with his death. Then naturally the chapter and the record of this vile king close with his death, which is fitly put in a sort of antithesis with his horrid impiety against the house and people of the living God. Though he had the power and the harshness to pitch his magnificent tents upon God's holy mountain, yet he came to his end and there was none to help. H. C.

Verse 40 takes up again the statement of verse 29, and expands it with reference to the Egyptians and some of the causes which led him to and from their country. When the Romans had compelled Antiochus to give up his conquests in Egypt they left him unmolested. During his lifetime they ignored his non-ob servance of treaties and his defiance of the limits which had been placed upon the numbers of his elephants and ships. This left him free to persecute the Jews and carry his arms

into the East. The angelic communication does not exhaust the details of those events (cf. the brevity of verse 45), but states the fact.

15. The fact of the "end" is alone predicted. Antiochus Epiphanes did not die in the Holy Land, but probably in the Persian town of Tabal. (Cf. 1 Mac. 6:4, 8; 2 Mac. 9; Joseph. Antiq. xii. 9; Polybius xxxi. 16). There were "none to help him." (Cf. 2 Mac. 9:28.) The Jewish and Roman historians agree that his end was miserable. While hastening homeward, after a repulse before a rich temple in Persia, and full of fury at the disastrous news which had reached him from Palestine, he was seized with an incurable illness. The most "brilliant" of the Syro-Macedonian kings died in the mountain town, consumed in body by a loathsome ulcer, afflicted in mind by horrible apparitions and remorse of conscience (Milman, "Hist. of Jews," Palmer). B. C.

It was the issue of the wars between the "kings of the north and of the south" that gave to them their great importance in the theocratic history, and rendered them a fitting subject for so long a prophecy as that which we have been considering. Their entire result was, to bring out, more strongly than it had ever been brought out before, the Roman influence over the affairs of the East, to intensify the antagonism between Rome and Syria, to place Egypt under a permanent Roman protectorate, and to make Rome the naturally and defender of every petty nationality which had any inclination to assert itself against Syria, and could do so with the least hope of success. The close connection between the Roman and Jewish peoples, which, beginning with the embassy of Judas Maccabæus in B.C. 161 (1 Mac. 8:17-32) terminated in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, was the consequence of the Syro-Egyptian struggle, and especially of the war between Epiphanes and Philometor, which therefore worthily occupies a very considerable space in the prophetic synopsis of Daniel. G. R.

## DANIEL, CHAPTER XII.

12:1 AND at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn  
 4 many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the  
 words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowl-  
 edge shall be increased.  
 5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river  
 6 on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. And one said to the man  
 clothed in linen, which was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of  
 7 these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was above the waters of the  
 river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that  
 liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when they have made an  
 end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.  
 8 And I heard, but I understood not; then said I, O my lord, what shall be the issue of these  
 9 things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are shut up and sealed till the  
 10 time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be re-  
 fined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but  
 11 they that be wise shall understand. And from the time that the continual *burnt offerings* shall  
 be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand  
 12 two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three  
 13 hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest,  
 and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days.

**Chap. 12.** This chapter speaks of a time of extraordinary trouble, from which, however, the people "written in the book of life" shall be delivered (verse 1); alludes to the resurrection and to the eternal retribution of the righteous and the wicked (verses 2, 3); directs Daniel to seal up the vision against the time of the end (verses 4, 9); gives designations of time (verses 5-12), and finally assures Daniel that he shall have his lot with the righteous (verse 13).

**1-11.** The first verse begins with saying that these events occur "*at that time*"—i.e., at the same time of which the previous chapter speaks, especially the time when those scenes of violent persecution of the Jews took place, noticed specially verses 31-35. A time of great trouble had been already indicated; it is resumed and reaffirmed here for the sake of further remark upon it. "Shall Michael stand up?" This Michael has been already introduced to us and in precisely the same relations, "standing up for thy people"—the Jewish nation, considered as the Lord's chosen ones, and also as being somewhat under Daniel's care also. (See chap. 10: 13, 21.) In verse 4 the direction to "shut up the words and to seal the book, reminds us that the same direction was given for the third vision (chap. 8: 26), and that "the time of the end" has been repeatedly before us (in chaps. 8: 17, 19; 11: 27, 35, 40), and practically in chap. 11: 26 also, plainly showing that these events and those, being brought within the same limitations of time, are substantially identical. In verse 6 "these wonders" can be none other than those which have been presented in the preceding parallel

visions. There are no other to which the phrase can refer. Chap. 8: 24 says, "He shall destroy wonderfully"—the same Hebrew word as here. In verse 7 "the holy people" must be the same as before in chap. 11: 32-35; the same as "the host and the stars" of chap. 8: 10-13, and "the mighty and the holy people" whom he "shall destroy" (chap. 8: 24). In verses 8, 9 Daniel says he does not yet understand all he would of these things, just as he had said before (chap. 8: 27). The revealing angel speaks here also of "the time of the end"—a phrase with which we are already entirely familiar, and which connects these disclosures most perfectly with those of the previous part of this vision and with those of the other visions parallel to this. The allusions in verse 10 to "the wise" carry us to chap. 11: 35, while the case of the wicked corresponds with the view given of the apostates in chap. 11: 30, 32. In verse 11 "the taking away of the daily sacrifice and the setting up of the abomination that maketh desolate," cannot possibly be separated from the same thing put in the same words (chaps. 11: 31; 8: 11). There is therefore the most abundant evidence of the closest connection between this chapter, on the one hand, and the eleventh, and also the parallel vision of chap. 8, on the other. The events referred to are the very same; the time of their occurrence is the same. The bonds of philological connection are of the very strongest kind.

**1.** To the first verse we have only to give the obvious sense, already made plain by its manifest allusion to things previously introduced. "At that time" must be near the

time of the death of Antiochus, with which the previous chapter closed. "Michael" we know already as the great archangel protector of the Jewish people. "The children of thy people" have been sufficiently identified as the Jews—thought of in their peculiar relations to Daniel. This "time of trouble" is the same terrible persecution which Antiochus waged against the pious Jews—as we saw in the vision of chap. 8, and in that of the eleventh. But "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one found written in the book"—*i.e.*, of life. H. C.

**1-3.** To whom and to what do these verses refer? The primary application seems clear. The phrases "at that time," "a time of trouble," "the wise" or "understanding ones," closely connect these verses with the previous chapter (11:40). Therefore if the latter portion of chap. 11 refers primarily to events connected with the last days of Antiochus Epiphanes, the opening verses of chap. 12 may be taken to refer to the same period.

But it is felt that this application is true in *general* outlines only. It is inadequate to illustrate the details, and insufficient to exhaust the spirituality of the verses. Hence it is rightly conceived that the Divine communication here made to Daniel was intended to be applicable for all times of persecution; and the passage—read by the light which our Lord has thrown upon it (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)—is replete to the Christian mind with thoughts of resurrection and judgment. B. C.

**2.** This second verse I understand to allude to the literal resurrection. But the manner and purpose of this allusion should be closely studied. Negatively, the revealing angel does *not* allude to it because his prophetic narrative has reached the literal resurrection in its chronological order—*i.e.*, has brought down the world's history to that point. This is simply impossible in view of the manifest connection of this entire chapter with the previous parallel visions, and especially with chap. 11. Nor does he allude to it for the sake of teaching the doctrine of the general resurrection as a new truth. For he does not here affirm or even imply a general universal resurrection. He does not say "*all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth.*" It remained for the great Author of the resurrection to make the first full announcement of the universal resurrection. All that is said here is that *many*, not *all*, but "many out of those that sleep in the dust shall wake to a new life." Yet again, the angel does not affirm that *then*, at that time,

many shall arise. He might have said this; probably would if he had meant so. But he did not say this. Positively, in my view, the resurrection is suggested here because of its relations to eternal retribution. So the last clause of this verse and also verse 3 would indicate. This eternal retribution is suggested by his thought of the noble Maccabean heroes, on the one hand, and of the vile apostates from their Jewish faith and of the cruel Syrian persecutors, on the other. To see holiness and sin in such intensive forms; to see some men so nobly good and others so meanly and malignantly wicked, naturally leads the mind to eternal retribution. Remember (the revealing angel would say), remember for your consolation and for the relief of your burdened heart, that God is surely just, and that His justice will not sleep forever. There will be a glorious reward for the righteous; and prominent among these will be the righteous dead who "fell by the sword, by flame, by captivity, and by spoil for many days" (chap. 11:33). There will also be a fearful doom of shame and everlasting contempt for those guilty apostates and their cruel Syrian associates who inflict these sufferings on the faithful servants of God. That this is the very thought of the revealing angel is made yet more sure by verse 3, where he refers explicitly to those noble Jewish martyrs: "They that be wise" (in Hebrew "the *maschilim*"); the very name given them in chap. 11:33, 35. Those who suffered so heroically and labored so earnestly to turn their Jewish brethren from idolatry to righteousness "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever." They stood and fell as "stars"—distinguished servants of God. (See chap. 8:10.) Now their joyous reward shall be to shine as the stars in the glorious firmament of heaven forever and ever. This explanation of a passage, usually accounted very difficult, seems to me to be entirely satisfactory. The thought of final eternal retribution is certainly altogether in place here in view of the circumstances. It was legitimately reached through the resurrection. This great fact of our being was neither new nor strange to the people of God in that age. The allusion in Isa. 26 and Ezek. 37 to the resurrection shows that the idea was even familiar. Hence his casual allusion to it, with no effort to state the doctrine of a universal resurrection in its full rounded form. H. C.

Even the body, as we now find it, is the crown of all material objects, the most admirable instance of the Divine workmanship—fear-

fully and wonderfully made—the perfection of beauty, the theme of the poet, the model of the artist, the prize of the warrior—"the human face and form divine"—our language is blamed with a want of words to speak its praise, while it is yet "of the earth, earthy." Conceive, then, if you can, what it shall be in the resurrection, putting on incorruption, and bidding farewell to hunger, thirst, disease, deformity and decay; a stranger to distress; proof against the undermining progress of years; like gold tried in the fire, bright and indestructible—and that not for a brief period. For, look again, you see the mortal put on immortality, ever fresh as the morning, while ages after ages roll their mighty rounds. R. T.

2, 3. When our Lord, referring to what was plainly set down in the Book of Daniel, said that all judgment was committed into His hands because He was the Son of Man, He referred to the description of the dominion of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, seen in the night visions of Daniel. And when He spoke of the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation, what was it but a Divine illumination and paraphrase of the great resurrection text in Daniel, that they who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt; when they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever? Christ it was and His Spirit that spake through all the prophets; but when Christ came on earth as the Word made flesh, then the Divine predictions in Daniel and all others became incarnate in Him, and the truth was seen and felt, no more in the difficulty or dimness of prophetic hieroglyphics, but living, moving, acting. The words that Christ uttered came as tongues of flame from the eternal world, touching men's souls as with fire; and all His revelations concerning the future retribution for the wicked assumed an awful distinctness, whether investing selected persons standing for classes of men, as Lazarus and Dives, and couched beneath the coloring and imagery of heaven and hell, personifying realities, or pealed forth in decisive language, as sharp and startling as the archangel's trumpet. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal! Was it any pleasure to our blessed Redeemer to unveil the secrets of the world of woe? Is it not all in mercy, all in love, that He puts for us, in such vivid light, the resurrection of life on one side and the resurrection

of damnation on the other, and bids us choose? G. B. C.

Whenever the Gospel is preached, this alternative is set before you; the alternative of "shining like the sun forever; or of awaking to shame and everlasting contempt." If there were no judgment seat at which we must appear, we might have our election between peace of conscience and the gratification of our desires. But our course here is a preparation for our course hereafter. Never discover in your thoughts a life of piety and a life of honor; there is no glory, no happiness, but in the love and service of God. R. Hall.

The Gospel alone has brought immortality to light. In the place of annihilation, or the transmigration of souls, or the dim place of shadows and of ghosts, or a paradise of sensual gratification, it reveals to us an eternity of moral pleasure or of moral pain, the eternal weight of glory or the wrath of God without mixture. Everything else makes this world substance, and the other world shadow. The Bible alone makes this world shadow, and the other world substance. While it makes this world merely the vestibule of our being, it alone renders it truly valuable, by making every moment and every purpose take strong hold of eternity. F. W. Wayland.—This subject of an eternal life is so vast and momentous that it will bear to be looked at in every aspect, and under every incidence of light. It is whether God is building out of the materials of His universe a gigantic tomb, or a glorious temple for living worshippers—whether we are inscribing empty epitaphs over everlasting graves, or erecting votive tablets to Him who liveth forever and ever, and whose life insures that of all who look upon His face. Christ's reasoning with the Sadducees about immortality, in which He founds it on the relation of our spiritual nature to God—the twilight questionings and gropings of the psalms and prophets—all encourage us to move round this mighty subject and study it in every point of view. Nor is it by His word alone, or even chiefly, that He reveals, but much more by His person and life, opening the unseen as the sun opens the world, by shining, and giving the conviction of its reality, by the new life which He infuses into the soul. His cross before the gate of death, His throne behind it, insures the whole. They tell not only of the certainty, but exceeding glory, of the soul's salvation; of its infinite value as seen by Him who could not overdate its duration, nor overestimate its worth, and who has set His seal upon both,

when, to make it heir of His own life, He gave Himself. *Ker.*

3. *And they that be wise shall shine.* The words allude to chap. 11 : 33, 35, and import that they who have been the great "lights" of the world, and have instructed others by their doctrine, and confirmed them in the truth by their sufferings and example, shall have an eminently glorious reward at the day of judgment. So the martyrs are described as having a share in "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20 : 5). Our Saviour's words plainly allude to this text (Matt. 13 : 43). *W. Louth.*—There is a glory reserved for all the saints in the future state, for all that are wise, wise for their souls and eternity. A man's wisdom now makes his face to shine (Eccles. 1 : 8) ; but much more will it do so in that state where its power shall be perfected and its services rewarded. The more good any do in this world, especially to the souls of men, the greater will be their glory and reward in the other world. They that turn men to righteousness, that turn sinners from the errors of their ways, and help to save their souls from death (James 5 : 20) will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their own glory. Ministers of Christ, who have obtained mercy of Him to be faithful and successful, and so are made burning and shining lights in this world, shall shine very bright in the other world, shall shine as the stars. Christ is the Sun, the Fountain of the lights both of grace and glory ; ministers, as stars, shine in both, with a light derived from Him, and a diminutive light in comparison of Him ; yet to them that are earthen vessels it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall shine as the stars of different magnitudes, some in less, others in greater lustre ; but whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven as leaves in autumn, these stars shall shine forever and ever, shall never set, never be eclipsed. *H.*

There are those whose lives are precious—Time's richest jewels. They are gold, silver, precious stones. In attempting to express the value of a truly faithful Christian life, words fail. I know of no expressions worthy of those that are gems in the Redeemer's crown, and having turned many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Take some humble private individual noiselessly pursuing his career of unostentatious Christian action—full of faith and prayer—ever studious of saving souls—dropping a word here or there like a harvest seed—studying opportunities—sparing

no effort—tasking every energy for his Master—and when his last work on earth is done, when his last word is spoken, and his last prayer uttered, in the ripeness and symmetry of a perfected Christian character going home to the reward of his Master's smile—and tell me if gold or silver or any of the precious things of earth are fit symbols of its unspeakable worth, of its untold blessings ! *Gillott.*

The enthusiasm of Christian love is a mighty power. The enthusiasm of hearts arrested by the mighty love of Christ, drawn into sympathy with Him, reflecting on their fellow-sinners the compassion that has embraced themselves, seeing in this disordered world a blessed sphere of service to God and man, and throwing their energies into the work of blessing it—that is a wonder-working power ! It goes on unweariedly in the work of faith and labor of love ; never deeming that it has done enough, or that it can ever do enough for Him whose love has fallen on it so richly, and is so well fitted to bless the whole family of man. *W. G. B.*

What stars, what jewelled honors flash on the world's swelling breast, to be for one moment compared with those which *they* win on earth and wear in heaven who have turned souls from darkness to light—from the cursed power of Satan to the living God ? Each soul a gem in their crown, they that have turned many to righteousness shall shine with the brightness of the firmament forever and ever. How has the hope of this touched, as with fire, the preacher's lips, sustained his heart, held up prayer's weary hands, and proved an ample recompense for those scanty rewards which God's servants too often receive at the hands of men—for the penury which has embittered and the hardships which have pressed on their lot ! Despised as the teacher of the Gospel may be, the apostle raises him to an eminence from which he may contemplate this world, with all its grandeur and glory, rolling away into dark oblivion. To him belongs the high pre-eminence of being able to say, "I am a fellow-laborer with God ;" and with such an associate—in such lofty company, devoting his life to such a cause—no wonder that Paul confronted a sceptical, scoffing world, and bravely said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." *Guthrie.*

Safety and firm footing in active life will be ours if we walk in Wisdom's ways. He who follows Christ's footsteps will tread surely and not fear foes. Quiet repose in hours of rest will be his. A day filled with happy service will be followed by a night full of calm

slumber. "Whether we sleep or wake, we live" with Him; and, if we do, both will be blessed, and our lives will move on gently to the time when days and nights shall melt into one, and there will be no need for repose; for there will be no work that wearies and no hands that droop. The last lying down in the grave will be attended with no terrors. The last sleep there shall be sweet; for it will really be awaking to the full possession of the personal Wisdom, who is our Christ, our life in death, our heaven in heaven. A. M.

If we go after fame, the Scriptures tell us that the name of the wicked shall rot. If we go after riches and cover ourselves with the outward splendors of fortune, they tell us that we must go out of life as poor as any; for, that having brought nothing material into the world, we can carry nothing material out. And then they add, do the works of love and truth, and these shall go with you. He that winneth souls is wise. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Be fishers of men. Watch for souls. If thy brother sin against thee, gain, if possible, thy brother. Be all things to all men, if by any means you may gain some. And then, when you have worn out all your powers in benefactions put upon souls, and believe that you have many who will be your crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus—then, I say, when the last hour is come, and the scenes of your mortal labor are retiring from your sight, have it for your song of triumph, and leave it to be chanted over your rest: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." All material properties are left behind; these cannot follow; but all the properties of duty and love must follow, and be gathered in after you to bless your fidelity, and crown your peace, and be your sacred wealth forever. Then it shall be seen what is meant by the value of one soul to another. *Bushnell.*

Men are to be redeemed by love; love is power, personal power working toward another winningly, operating in him actuatingly, resting on him as a benediction. And men grow surprisingly interesting as soon as we begin to be interested in them. And we shall find in people just as much heart as we have the heart to find in them. As soon as we begin in a Christ-like way to love people we shall discover that they like to be loved. They are in our power if our power is heart-power. It is an easy thing to make a friend. It is like God to make a friend, and a friend is a permanent

possession, treasure in heaven, imperishable jewel, star in our crown of rejoicing, out of which the light never fades. C. H. P.

4. *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words.* To "shut up" a book and to "seal" it is the same with concealing the sense of it from common understandings. (See chap. 8:26.) The same reason is assigned for this command in both places—viz., because there would be a long interval of time between the date and the final accomplishment of the prophecy. (Cf. chap. 10:1.) But the nearer that time approached, the more light should men have for understanding the prophecy itself; as is implied in the following words, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;" many shall be inquisitive after truth, and keep correspondence with others for their better information; and the gradual completion of some prophecies shall direct observing readers to form a judgment concerning those particulars which are yet to be fulfilled. *W. Louth.*

The advances of human knowledge in this world show the forecast of an overruling Mind in the fact that knowledges come to the front when they are needed. Timeliness is a grand factor in the history of inventions and discoveries. A similar law of timeliness governs the higher advances of knowledge which arch over the two worlds of sense and spirit. Some knowledges are timely to this world, and others to that. Some discoveries fit a state of probation, others a state of moral repose. Some are congenial with a world of sense, others not even intelligible but to disembodied mind. Some are pertinent to the infancy and some to the maturity of an endless life. Reserve of knowledge till the ripening of conditions is one of the signal features of God's wisdom. The future ages of our immortality may have great epochs of discovery. Then we may learn the secret blessing of our profoundest ignorance here of things for which the time has not yet come.

The analogies of this world lead us to believe that through the unending succession of discoveries of God which lie before us we shall find, as we do here, the constant recurrence of the critical "nick of time." We shall be told what, and when, and where, it will be safe for us to know. The thoughtful kindness of God hides us from revelations which would be untimely to our conditions. But for this our growth in character might be convulsive and catastrophic in its working. We exult in the dignity of knowledge; we make it the synonym of power. But in moral surroundings, which make knowl-

edge unseasonable, the blessing of ignorance is incalculably greater. *Philp.*

7. The general sense is clear: the time of the end shall be when the "scattering" (cf. Isa. 11: 12; 27: 9; Jer. 13: 14; 51: 20, 23) or the dispersion of the holy people is finished. As regards the application, it is natural to find in the words a reference to an end to the troubles which in Daniel's vision had gathered so thickly about the holy people. Hence such passages as 1 Mac. 5: 23, 45, 53 seq.; 2 Mac. 8 seq., which tell how the Maccabæe brothers, Simon and Judas, brought back again (B.C. 169) to the land of Judea their captive fellow-countrymen ("part" of the holy people), supply a partial accomplishment of the verse. But what came true in the Maccabean period has yet to receive its last and highest verification in the day when the scattering of God's people and their "tribulation in the world" shall be forever "accomplished." B. C.

8. Daniel does not yet understand so definitely as he would, and therefore asks again what shall be the end of these things. The form of his question and his choice of words (*What* rather than *When*) seem to indicate a somewhat wider range than simply the idea of duration. That is, he asks not merely *how long*, but *what shall be the issues*; including, however, the length of time. Consequently the answer teaches both points; first indicating that the words are closed and sealed up till the time of the end, and therefore will not be much known till near that time; next, that active agencies of moral discipline will surely do their work, some being made better and some made worse by these events of God's providence; also that "the wise," the studious, humble and docile shall readily understand, but none of the wicked, for their sin darkens their intellect while it sears their conscience and hardens their heart. H. C.

9. The angel's reply is not to be understood as discouraging. "Go thy way" is a phrase said kindly, and intended to comfort the prophet. Daniel had been already charged (verse 4) to shut up the words, etc.; he is now told—in answer to his question (verse 8)—that God had done this; the opening and unsealing would be in God's time; and in that assurance he was to rest (verse 13). B. C. —When the proper season comes, possibly in some cases not before the event hath interpreted them, the prophecies will prove their own reality by their clearness; and strengthen, perhaps in an hour of much need, "the patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev. 13: 10). Thus it happened

to the apostles. They understood not beforehand our Saviour's prediction, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." But "when He was risen from the dead, they remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2: 19, 22). *Alp. Secker.*

10. *Many shall be purified.* The persecutions of the faithful are designed for the trial of their faith and the purification of their lives. *W. Louth.*—A verse which has been freely reproduced in Rev. 22: 11. "Many," from Daniel's time, would pass through "purification," and "being made white," meet with "trial" beyond; "many" are doing so this day; it will be the lot of "many" so long as the present order of things continues. But if they are "wise," "understanding ones" (cf. 5: 3; 11: 35), "they shall understand," a promise which was also the answer to Daniel's remark, "I cannot understand" (verse 8). B. C.

*None of the wicked shall understand.* Because they are wicked and will continue in their sins, the eyes of their understanding shall be closed and their hearts hardened; so that they shall not see the light of the glorious Gospel. *But the wise.* Those who open their hearts to God that He may pour in His light; they shall understand the things that make for their peace. A. C.

There are three remarkable points of contrast exhibited in this passage. 1. *A contrast of character.* The term "wise" describes the righteous, who possess that religion which is emphatically "wisdom from above;" the epithet "wicked" expresses both blindness of mind and depravity of heart. 2. *A contrast of moral progress.* The wise are "purified and made white" by their trials; the same discipline continue to "do wickedly." The same discipline, the very same dispensations, produce opposite effects; and the determination of their career respectively will exhibit a remarkable and eternal contrast. 3. *A contrast of mental and spiritual perception.* It is affirmed that "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." Wickedness contracts the mind, debases the understanding, and renders man so selfish and carnal that he becomes incapacitated for taking any comprehensive view of the Divine administration, and indisposed to these sacred inquiries. One important point, especially, which the one, through the teachings of that Spirit who is humbly but incessantly sought by Christians, *does* understand, and which the other, through wilful blindness and



perverseness of heart, does *not* understand, is *the connection of the operations of Providence in the general affairs of the world, with the establishment, extension and ultimate triumph of the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ.* F. A. Cor.

The afflictions of good people are designed for their trial; but by these trials they are purified and made white; their corruptions are purged out, their graces are brightened and made both more vigorous and more conspicuous, and are found to praise, and honor, and glory (1 Pet. 1:7). To those who are themselves sanctified and good, every event is sanctified and works for good, and helps to make them better. II.

Afflictions, in order to produce any permanent impression of a spiritual kind, must powerfully excite the natural sensibilities. A slight impression upon the feelings will be followed only by a slight religious effect, or rather by no effect at all. An affliction must be an affliction. The soul must be torn in sunder before the balm of Gilead can be applied. In all ordinary cases, instead of checking the current of tears, and drying the sources of sorrow, tears ought to flow, and the fountains of grief ought to be broken up. The gay world will soon enough suggest consolatory topics. The cares of business will soon enough engross the mind. Time will not be too backward to close the wound which death has made. Sanctified sorrow is deeply seated sorrow. There may be, indeed, a desperate grief which is of the world, and which worketh death. Nevertheless, when the spirit of God blesses the soul by means of affliction, He first casts that soul into the furnace perhaps seven times heated. There is a stain of sin on our hearts which nothing but the "fuller's soap" can wash out. There is a "chamber of abominations" within us, which nothing but the torch of the refiner can enlighten, and the fire of the refiner purify. The great purpose of affliction is to take away sin. B. B. Edwards.

It is not only that in point of fact tribulation happens to lie between Christians and their rest; it has been placed there of deliberate design by a wise and loving Father, in order that, by passing through it, they may be prepared for a rest beyond. In some of the most delicate manufactures the web, in a rude and unsightly state, enters a vessel filled with a certain liquid, passes slowly through, and emerges continuously at the opposite side. As it enters, the cloth seems all of one color, and that one dim and unattractive; as it emerges, it glitters in a variety of brilliant hues arranged in cun-

ning figures, like a robe of needle-work for the adornment of a queen. The liquid through which the fabric passes is composed of certain fiery, biting acids; and the reason why it is strained through such a bath is, that in the passage all the deforming and defiling things that have adhered to its surface in preceding processes may be discharged, and the figures, already secretly imprinted, may shine out in their beauty. So the disciples of Christ are in this life drawn through great tribulation, although the Lord who loves them has all power in heaven and in earth: nay, precisely because the Lord who loves them has all power in heaven and in earth, they are bathed in this sea of sorrows. In wisdom and love, both infinite, the Lord has mingled the ingredients, and determined the duration of the baptism; so that, on the one hand, none of His should be lost, and, on the other, every grace of the Spirit should be brought out in its beauty upon all His own. Thus, there is a "need be" for the great tribulation; but we shall miss more than half the meaning of the word here if we think of this necessity as applicable only to the suffering. Another thing is necessary—a better and a brighter. True, it is said of all Christ's people, that they *must* pass through much tribulation; but it is also said of them that they *must* enter the kingdom. As certainly as He came out to seek, those whom He finds shall go in. The Captain of our salvation will bring many sons into glory. *Arnot.*

Trial is man's only and compulsory teacher in the *knowledge of himself*. Shutting him up to self-communion, it confronts him with the grand questions of his immortal being and compels him to reflection upon the issues he is working out for himself, upon the character he is forming, the relations he sustains, the ground of hope for the future he is cherishing, the destiny to which he is hastening. No one who has been prostrated by the strong hand of disease but in the long days and wearisome nights of loneliness and pain has experienced this effect of the trial: thoughtfulness upon the aims and ends of life, leading to personal heart questioning, to painful thoughtfulness about his soul's condition and prospects. No one who has long anxiously watched beside beloved ones, or whose heart has been sorely stricken by actual bereavement, but has been constrained to reflect deeply upon the same great questions, to learn much and make personal application of the realities of sickness and death so affectingly taught. And no one who has met any other REAL trial, who has encountered disap-

pointment in any of its severe forms, but, through the impression it has wrought of the frailty and insufficiency of human ties and earthly hopes, has had the heart thrown back upon itself to ponder the same momentous questions of the soul's true character, life and destiny.

Nor is knowledge of self the only blessed effect designed and produced by trial. In every soul its discipline alone has wrought out the invigoration, the knitting into compactness and bardness, and the mightiest exertion of all the intellectual and moral forces. Through its ordeal alone men have been trained to do and to endure. Through its self-crucifying process some ungodly men indeed, in their bitterness, have been nerved to persistence in a hardening course of bold, defiant ungodliness. But others, whose hearts have been subdued and broken before God, have been strengthened to struggle with and break away from the tremendous forces of inbred and outwardly exerted corruption. And chiefly by the same self-struggle and crucifixion, wrought under God through trial, believing souls have had the Divine forces and graces of piety exercised and maintained, invigorated and developed, have had increased their trust, their hope, their Christ-like endeavor, have made their chief progress in holiness and toward heaven. No words can express how much of gain and blessing man owes to trial, how many its uses, how vast its extent of good to the spiritual universe. No wonder that Nature in all her processes multiplies analogies to instruct our souls upon a point so sublimely important. No wonder that the giant trees of the mountain have wrestled with the mighty tempests of centuries; no wonder that the clouds obscure and the night shuts out the day; no wonder that a seeming death overspreads the wintry face of the earth, that the life of tree and plant descends to their hidden roots. For in all these processes she declares plainly the necessary uses, the life-invigorating fruits of trial and suffering wrought in the invisible depths of the soul. More plainly still, Revelation confirms the same great truth, discloses on almost every page the necessity, the wisdom and kindness of God's trying dispensations. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" is the substance of the inspired testimonies of psalmist, patriarch, prophet and apostle. There is a "need be" for every trial; it is administered of God "for our profit, that we may be made partakers of His holiness," is the one uniform assertion of the mouth of God. B.

**13.** *But go thou thy way till the end be.* Here

is proper advice for every man. Thou hast a *way, a walk in life*, which God has assigned thee; *walk in that way*. There will be an *end* to thee of all earthly things. Death is at the door, and eternity is at hand; *go on to the end*, be faithful unto death. There is a *rest* provided for the people of God. Thou shalt *rest*; thy *body* in the *grave*, thy *soul* in the *Divine favor here*, and, finally, in *Paradise*. As in the promised land, there was a *lot* for *each* of *God's people*, so in heaven there is a *lot* for *thee*. Do not *lose* it, do not *sell* it, do not let thy enemy *rob* thee of it. Be determined to *stand in thy own lot at the end of the days*. See that thou keep the faith; die in the Lord Jesus, that thou may rise and reign with Him to all eternity. A. C.

*Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot*—i.e., thou shalt rest in the grave (Isa. 57:2) when the end of thy life has come, and shalt have part in the kingdom of the saints of the Most High. (Cf. 7:18, 27; Rev. 20:6.) That the words contain a reference to and a belief in the resurrection is self-evident; his "lot" would fall to him in the heavenly Canaan. "Blessed are they that" work and "wait" like Daniel; they shall "enter into the joy" of their Lord and "rest and stand" in His presence "at the end of the days." B. C.

The promises of God cannot fail; all that He has spoken concerning the triumphs of the Gospel must come to pass; and it is for us to labor on in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. It is only in this thought—faithfulness, not fruitfulness, the criterion of reward—that we seem to get any light on the sorrowful mystery of premature missionary graves. The young and gifted and consecrated servant, who has sacrificed everything to obey the great commission, falling almost as soon as he has reached his field! How can we justify the ways of God in permitting it? Does the Lord really choose His workmen, assign them to the work that is dearest to His heart, and then have no care that they fall ere the work is hardly begun? What if we answer that the obscurest missionary tomb is just as precious in the sight of God as the most illustrious missionary triumph? There it stands, before the eye of the Master, as a certificate of obedience to His great commission—a testimony of faithfulness unto death for Christ's sake. "Thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." It is everything that the fallen missionary shall be able to stand up in the heathen country where he laid down his life, and at the sound of the resurrection trumpet to say to his Lord: "Here I am, just where Thou didst send me, ready

for any further service or reward which may be assigned me." *A. J. Gordon.*

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Ere we close, let us again revert to Daniel, at once the great historian and the great prophet of his time ; who more than any other man wrote contemporary history along with his prophecies and future history *in* his prophecies ; who wonderfully blended his own present life with that tuture in which the Lord suffered him to live so intensely ; who did so much for his people while he lived, so much for the age in which he lived and who yet, through his wonderful prophecies, projected himself down into that most terrible age of Jewish persecution, more terrible by far than any other through which the Jewish Church as such was ever called to pass ; raised up of God for these special ends—to help the nation first through the Babylonish captivity, and next, through the yet more fierce and fiery ordeal of torture and blood to which they were subjected in the age of the Maccabees ; a wonderful man, endowed with wisdom almost superhuman, of marvellous capacities for public business, for bearing great responsibilities, and for winning the confidence of men who never loved his religion and never worshipped

his God, but who yet felt the presence of his piety and the power of his intrinsic greatness and worth ; such a man was justly held in the highest esteem by his countrymen ; nay, more ; such a man impresses us with a new sense of the wealth of resources at God's command for making great men for His own use on great occasions. The beauty of his character shines in his pure simplicity ; in his modesty and humility ; in the fact that he filled a sphere of thought and purpose high above the seductions of human ambition ; that he dwelt in communion with God and drew his mighty impulses to goodness and even to greatness from the very sanctuary of Jehovah's presence ; that hence his heart was full to overflowing with the tenderest sympathies for his people, so that he truly lived in their life, and felt borne down and crushed in utter prostration by the views God gave him prophetically of their future afflictions and perils. What did not the grace of God do for this great and good man ! Verily, God raised him up and made him what he was for use among his own people ! This same God is never short of fit instruments for great emergencies. Let him be joyfully trusted to raise up other men no less great and good, what time new and great emergencies shall occur to call them forth ! *H. C.*

# INTRODUCTIONS: MINOR PROPHETS; HOSEA.

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## 1. MINOR PROPHETS.

THE minor prophets are often treated as if by minor was meant that they were of less importance, whereas it really means that their writings are of smaller bulk. We scarcely realize that five of these prophets were the predecessors of Isaiah, and that they lead up to him in a very remarkable way. We note the fact that they are more frequently quoted by the apostles in the Acts, when speaking to the Jews, than the greater prophets. The text of the first Christian sermon is taken by Peter from Joel; Stephen gives emphasis to his argument by a quotation from Amos (7: 42, 43); and by a quotation from the same prophet James decides the question discussed at the first Christian council (15: 16, 17). So, too, if we look at the doctrines first revealed by their instrumentality, we shall find that they hold a very foremost place in our belief. It is Joel who teaches us the momentous facts of a future resurrection and a general judgment, and of that outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, without which these doctrines would be a terror to us. It is Micah who reveals to men the place of our Lord's birth, Zechariah His crucifixion, Jonah His resurrection, though veiled beneath a sign. And as they were the earliest of the prophets who left written memorials of their work, so were they the last. The Old Testament closes with the trumpet sounds of Malachi, telling us of the near approach of the Forerunner, of the separation of the Jewish nation into those who accepted Christ and those who rejected Him, and of the coming of days when, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, no victim should bleed upon an altar, but the meat offering, the type of Christian worship, he offered every where unto Jehovah's name.

At the head of this goodly twelve stands Hosea, not because he was foremost in order of time, but because his writings are the longest of those who lived in the Assyrian period.

Really the twelve prophets are arranged in three series—those of the Assyrian period, Hosea to Nahum, first; those of the Chaldean age, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, next; and those who lived after the Exile last. Of the first series it was Hosea who held the prophetic office for the longest time, and this may probably have also had its weight in causing him to be placed at the head, especially as the title runs parallel with that of Isaiah, the foremost of the greater prophets. As regards the rest, Delitzsch has shown with much beauty that they are arranged with a view to the grouping of the ideas which they present in common. "Because Hosea, at the end of his prophetic writings, foretold to penitent Israel, watered with the dew of Divine grace, a rich harvest of corn, and a fresh verdure and blossoming like the rose, the olive, and the vine; while Joel begins his prophetic writings at a time when harvest and vintage had failed, and therefore calls the people to repentance—on this account the collector has joined the two prophets together. With fine taste, again, he has made Amos follow Joel, because Amos begins his predictions with the striking words found near the end of the writings of Joel (chap. 3: 16), 'The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem.' Upon Amos follow Obadiah, because his whole prophecy seems, as it were, an unfolding of the remarkable prediction of Amos (chap. 9: 12), 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom.' But why does Jonah come after Obadiah? Because Obadiah says, 'We have heard a rumor from Jehovah, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen' (Obad. 1), and such an ambassador Jonah seemed to be. Next in this group comes Nahum, not merely because he belongs to the Assyrian period, but because he has a common interest with Jonah and Micah in that celebrated utterance of the law (Ex. 34: 6, 7), that God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." R. P. S.

The prophets are the most conspicuous

teachers of spiritual religion. The priests failed to apprehend that the one end and aim of religion is righteousness; that a religion consisting exclusively of ceremonies, a religion divorced from morality, is no religion at all. It is the protest against this idolatry of the outward function which marks the theology of the prophets. "Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," said Samuel. "I despise your feast days, and will not smell in your solemn assemblies," was the message of the Lord by Amos. "I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of the Lord more than burnt offerings," said Hosea, in words which our Lord loved to quote. "What doth the Lord require of thee," asks Micah, "but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "Bring no more vain oblations," says Isaiah; "but wash you—make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes." "The just," says Habakkuk, in words which were the keynote of the theology of Paul, "shall live by faith." Thus did the prophets, one after another, make light of the pompous religionism of offerings and ceremonial, and anticipate the teaching of the Son of God: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

Another and most precious characteristic of the mission of the prophets is the steady, inextinguishable spirit of hope which animated them amid the direst catastrophes of their people, and which gleams out amid their stormiest predictions of retribution and woe. And this hope spreads outward in ever-widening circles. Even when the prophecies of Israel's destruction seem to be most sweeping, it is always intimated that Israel shall not utterly be destroyed. And this hope, which sometimes seems to fill their pages with Divine contradictions, centres more and more brightly, more and more definitely, in a Divine person, an Anointed Deliverer, a coming Saviour for all mankind. And this prophecy is the pervading and central element of the whole sacred canon. "As we watch the weaving of the web of Hebrew life, we endeavor to trace through it the more conspicuous threads. Long time the eye follows the crimson; it disappears at length; but the golden thread of sacred prophecy stretches to the end." So true is the great saying of the apostle, that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The Messianic hope, and the trust in

God by which it was inspired and continued, is the richest legacy of the prophets to all after ages.

The apostles evidently attached a high value to the minor prophets. In the New Testament they are more frequently quoted than the greater prophets (by which we merely mean larger prophets). *Farrar*.

## 2. HOSEA AND HIS PROPHECY.

Of the person of the prophet we know nothing more than that he was the son of Beeri, of the tribe of Ephraim. Thus, he is one of the two—Jonah being the other—who alone of all the prophets certainly belonged to the Ten Tribes. Yet these tribes had produced Elijah and Elisha, and under the latter the schools of the prophets had flourished to an unprecedented extent. With Jonah written prophecy had also its first commencement in the northern kingdom, but it was in Judah that it attained to its full majesty and strength.

Hosea could not have been long subsequent to Jonah, for both flourished in the palmy days of Jeroboam II., Israel's last great king, who reigned forty and one years, and by whose hand God saved the people, as Jonah had foretold in a prophecy no longer extant, but referred to in 2 K. 14: 25. Jehu's had been a warlike line, and Jehoash, Jeroboam's father, the conqueror of Jerusalem (2 K. 14: 13), had probably laid the foundation of Jeroboam's conquests, which extended from Hamath, on the northern border of Syria, to the Dead Sea. This period of empire, under the strong hand of a powerful sovereign, was Israel's final opportunity for a national repentance. And before it passed away God sent the people a prophet, powerful in deed and word, to press upon them this their last hope. They refused; and Hosea lived to see Samaria's fall. In the fourth year of Hezekiah, *b.c.* 721, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, took Samaria, and carried the Ten Tribes away captive and placed them in scattered colonies throughout his vast realm.

It was probably, however, only toward the close of Jeroboam's reign that Hosea entered upon his office; for we read that he prophesied also during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. It is remarkable that the book does cover the whole of the sixty-two years and more which was the duration of Hosea's ministry. In chap. 1: 4 he foretells the speedy ruin of Jehu's race. Now, of all the kings of Israel after Jeroboam, Jehu was the only one who had a right to the throne. All the rest were successful soldiers; but Jehu

was called by God's prophet. Yet he almost immediately proved unworthy of the trust, and while he extirpated with unrelenting cruelty the family of Ahab and the worshippers of Baal as being certain enemies to his own dynasty, he regarded with indifference the worship of the golden calves. But this cruelty was looked upon by God with abhorrence, and Hosea predicts that "yet a little while, and Jehovah will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel." Now, Jeroboam's death was followed by an anarchy of eleven years, and then his son Zachariah reigned for six months; at the end of which time he was murdered by Shallum. Hosea thus began to prophesy before the limited reward given to Jehu for partial services was completed; at the end of chap. 13 Samaria's fall is close at hand. The Assyrian armies are closing upon her, and the horrible cruelties which these inhuman conquerors used to inflict upon the cities which fell into their hands are clearly set forth. It is plain that this prediction of Samaria's fate was written in Hosea's reign, because in an earlier chapter (10 : 14) the prophet gives us some particulars of the first invasion of Shalmaneser, referred to in 2 K. 17 : 3. R. P. S.

His message was mainly to the kingdom of Israel, the Ten Tribes who had revolted from Judah; and this period, during which he carried God's messages to them, was the most frightful in their history. It was a period of change and confusion, of anarchy, murder, and usurpation. After Jeroboam's death there was an interregnum of ten years, and then Zechariah seized the sceptre. In six months he was slain by Shallum. In four weeks this man was murdered by Menahem; and the murderer, while his hands reeked with blood, took the reins of government, and managed to hold them for ten years, while the chariot of the State rolled over a horrible path, enveloped in storms. Pekahiah succeeded him, and after wearing the crown two years, was put to death by Pekah; and then Pekah, twenty years after, was put to death by Hoshea. Hoshea brings up the rear of these usurpers, and with him closes the history of the Israelitish kingdom. "The Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day." A tragical period truly. What events—not particularly recorded, but which are implied in the general narrative—must have transpired! How would the soul of the good prophet be shocked by the things which he

heard! How would his old age be darkened and distressed by the troubles of his nation! How would tears trickle down his time-furrowed cheeks because of the hurt of the daughter of his people! *Stoughton.*

*The basis of the prophet's teaching.* The characteristic feature of Hosea's book is his representation of the relation between God and the chosen people in terms of the marriage tie. Jehovah is the nation's husband, and Israel His unfaithful spouse. The choice of the figure is remarkable, and still more startling the use that is made of it. The idea of a conjugal union between a god and the land or people belonging to him was, indeed, a commonplace of Semitic religions. And it had its natural sequel in the encouragement of gross sexual abuses as a regular accompaniment of the established worship. The very evil that was blighting Ephraim in Hosea's age was the introduction of this physical conception, with its vile abuses, into the cult of Jehovah. Yet it is precisely this notion that the prophet takes and makes the basis of his entire polemic against the prevalent ills of the time, and the keynote of his teaching concerning God and His purposes with His people.

How came Hosea to a thought of such bold and original creativeness? He tells us that it grew out of a personal experience of a very remarkable character. By Divine direction he formed relations either of marriage or concubinage with one or possibly two women of dissolute life, had children, assigned to these significant names, and was taught thus to discern the meaning and drift of Jehovah's ways with His faithless people. Taken in this bare and probably inexact reading, the story is so repulsive that a majority of interpreters have always refused to count it an actual transaction, and have relegated it to the category of symbolical action, allegory or objective vision—whatever that may mean. But what would be foul in fact does not become clean in symbol, vision, or fancy, and so in neither case would the supposed transaction have been possessed of much edifying efficacy. Moreover, if acted in dumb show, or simply told as a parable, it would not have had any specially impressive power on the minds of spectators or hearers, while as an actual experience in the prophet's home, its movement would be too slow and its scenes too removed from public view to tell on the conscience of the community. Evidently its purpose was not the instruction of the people, but the making of the prophet. What the painful tragedy could accomplish as nothing else could,

was to penetrate the prophet's own life and thought and spirit with an analogical but intensely vivid realization of the heart and mind of God in His dealing with wayward Israel. And for that, we cannot but conclude, it must have been an experience actually lived through—not, however, in relations of baseness, but necessarily in a sphere of pure and honorable love, hope and aspiration. That it was an actual episode in the prophet's fortunes is confirmed by the fact that while the children's names are manifestly symbolical, the wife's name is as certainly real and not imaginative. While we have but to bring to the story an intelligent knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of Hebrew narration and the methods of Divine revelation to get rid of a number of unhappy assumptions, and to find, in place of a history that, whether allegory or actuality, was alike repellent and spiritless, a pure and pathetic tale of suffering and loyal love, which might well make a high-tuned heart sensitive to the Divine tenderness, and stir a brave-souled patriot to the career of a prophet.

Hosea was a citizen of northern Israel, in whom burned the zeal of Elijah for Jehovah. The persistent sinning of his people pained him and perplexed him with questions concerning God and providence in the past, present and future. At last light broke on him from a strange quarter, and yet certainly from heaven. It was "the beginning of God's word" to him, and through him to Israel. By Divine guilance, under the impulse of a warm attachment, he married, counting on a pure and happy domestic life. But his wife, contaminated by the religious taint of the time, proved unfaithful. He forbore with her, and hoped for amendment. Children were born, and, by Divine direction, called by names significant of Israel's disloyalty to her God. The truth was penetrating Hosea's whole being, that in him and his faithless spouse God was exhibiting types of Himself and wayward Israel. At length, by Hosea's act or her own, the unhappy wife ceased to be an inmate of his home, a partaker of his care and shelter. She fell into a condition of slavery and misery. The old love was not gone from Hosea's heart. The thing was almost beyond the humanly possible, but a voice within him said, "Go, love her still, and by firm and tender handling win her back to purity."

It was the voice of God. Nay, it was the spirit of Jehovah in Hosea reproducing the feeling, thought and action of God in His treatment of Israel. The prophet's first ardent attachment, his pain and grief under his wrongs,

his loathing of the sin, his jealous indignation, his relenting, and patience, and forbearance, the loving sternness of discipline, the clinging affection that followed the unhappy outcast, the compassion for her in her degradation, the more than human loyalty of love and strength of goodness that recovered and redeemed her—these emotions, and conflicts, and experiences in Hosea are echoes and expressions of the very heart of God. This is the secret of Jehovah and of His providential leading of His people. *Etmslie.*

The words of upbraiding, of judgment, of woe, burst out, as it were, one by one, slowly, heavily, condensed, abrupt, from the prophet's heavy and shrinking soul, as God commanded and constrained him, and put His words, like fire, in the prophet's mouth. He delivers his message as though each sentence burst with a groan from his soul, and he had anew to take breath before he uttered each renewed woe. Each verse forms a whole for itself like one heavy toll in a funeral knell. *Pacey.*

His sorrowful expostulations, his terrible warnings, are illumined by hope. They terminate in hope. He has hope for his country and hope for the Church. "The prophet's mind was intensely interested in the destinies of his own people. The nations around him are unheeded; his prophetic eye beholds the crisis approaching his country, and sees its cantons ravaged, its tribes murdered or enslaved. No wonder that his rebukes are so terrible, his menaces so "alarming that his soul poured forth its strength in an ecstasy of grief and affection. Invitations replete with tenderness and pathos are interspersed with his warnings and expostulations. Now we are startled with a vision of the throne, at first shrouded in darkness, and sending forth lightnings, thunders, and voices; but while we gaze it becomes encircled with a rainbow, which gradually expands till it is lost in that brilliancy which itself had originated." Yes, amid the storm the prophet shows us the rainbow. Cloud after cloud comes, and there is thunder, but the rainbow is painted on the cloud. The prophet hopes and teaches the nation and the Church to hope. *Stoughton.*

What the prophet had grace to see was the certainty that God is amid all confusions a God of order, amid all contradictions a God of verity, amid all judgments a God of love. It is this element of hope which gives to the writings of the prophets their highest value, for it is a recognition of the eternal principle of the government of the world. And this golden close

of the denunciations, this opening even in the valley of Achor a door of hope, this pointing to the resplendent arc of the rainbow of mercy amid the darkest bursts of storm, is the most marked characteristic not of Hosea only, but of Joel, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and all the greatest of the true prophets. *Farrar.*

The characteristic of Hosea's book is that the burden of Israel's guilt lies weighty on his soul; he wails and mourns and laments and repents with that sinful people. He almost expresses a sense of his vicarious involvement in their guilt and carrying of their sorrows. That is the note which gives its exquisite music of pathos and beauty to Hosea's prophecy of the coming downfall of his own land and of his own people.

It is of little use to try to divide the Book of Hosea into minute paragraphs and divisions, and to trace a line of thought through it, because, if there is any book in the Bible which is one long musical burst of emotional life and harmonious unity from beginning to end, it is the Book of Hosea. The man was not so much an intellect; he was a great, overflowing heart. He cannot think out things and reason out things. He sways, like a pendulum, from one extreme to another, now blazing indignation against the people's wickedness and blindness and madness, and the next moment lamenting over them like a mother over her only son.

Emotion is the characteristic of Hosea's writing. Thought, again, is the characteristic of the writing of Amos. And so far as thought goes, the key-doctrine of Amos is this: God is righteous sovereignty. The key-doctrine of Hosea is this: God is holy love. The key-conception of Hosea's doctrine, Hosea's gospel, Hosea's prophecy, is that the actual, real relation between God and Israel is best represented for his purpose by the tie between husband and wife. It is true that he varies that image near the end of his prophecy. There he pictures God as his Father, and Israel as his child, his son. But still the great, moulding, explaining thought throughout the whole book is the marriage tie as a picture of the covenant between Jehovah and His people. *Elmslie.*

Hosea contains much of a Christian import cited by our Lord, by Matthew and by Paul. (Cf. Matt. 2:15 with Hos. 11:1; Matt. 9:13 and 12:7 with Hos. 6:6; Rom. 9:25, 26 with Hos. 2:23; and 1 Cor. 15:55 with Hos. 13:14.) These passages may not be considered directly Messianic in the strict sense of that word; but they contain promises relating to Messianic times, in which they receive their

fulfilment. Their peculiarity, according to Hengstenberg, "as compared with those of the time of David and Solomon, consists in the connection of the promise with threatenings of judgments, and in the Messiah's appearing as the light of those who walk in the deepest darkness of the Divine judgments." These promises supported God's people in the midst of the gloom and darkness of the times. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hos. 14:5, 6, sq.). *Elliott.*

Perhaps none of the prophets has within the same compass included such a multitude of short, memorable and figurative sentences. His coin is minute in size, but at once precious and abundant. What texts for texts are the following: "My people are destroyed or cut off for lack of knowledge." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? your goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew." "Ephraim is a cake not turned." "Gray hairs are sprinkled or dispersed upon him, and he knoweth it not." "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us." "I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." "I gave them a king in mine anger, and I will take him away in my wrath." "O death, where is thy triumph? O grave, where thy destruction?" "I will be as the dew unto Israel." "What hath Ephraim any more to do with idols?" If the beginning of his prediction somewhat repel, the close of it should enchain every reader. It is the sweetest, roundest, most unexpected of the prophetic perorations. All his woes, warnings, struggles, hard obscurities, and harsh ellipses and transitions are melted down in a strain of music, partly pensive and partly joyous, fresh as if it rose from earth, and aerial as if it descended from heaven. The controversies of the book are now ended; its contradictions reconciled—the balance sleeps in still light; God and His people are at length made one through the gracious medium of pardoning love. *Gillfillan.*

No serious attempt has ever been made to throw doubt upon the genuineness and integrity of the Book of Hosea. It remains only to add that, owing to the prophets of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel forming one closely connected body, Hosea's writings were



soon well known in Judah, and are often referred to by Jeremiah. We also gather from his many allusions to things prescribed by the Levitical law, and which were evidently still in use in Israel, coupled with similar incidental references in Amos, that Jeroboam I. had retained the main features of the Mosaic institutions, while engrafting upon them for political purposes a debased symbolism which degraded and corrupted the whole. R. P. S.

*Relation to the Sacred Canon.*

THE Book of Hosea, of a date and of an authenticity which are both unquestionable and in fact unquestioned, is a witness of the utmost value for previous portions of the Old Testament. A number of allusions put it beyond all lawful doubt that Hosea in the eighth century before Christ had in His hands a Hebrew literature identical with much which we possess at the present hour. B. C. (See Bib. Com. vi. 409.)

In this prophet we find abundant references to the books of the Law and the earlier historical books. We can detect allusions to or acquaintance with the contents of each book of the five, and the testimony is the more important because it is so obviously unintentional. We find him speaking of the Law as of a code which existed in writing. He says to Ephraim, in the name of God (8:12), "I have written to him the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing." Eight hundred years before Christ, then, the Law must have been known in the divided kingdom, and reckoned of sufficient authority to be appealed to as Divine, or for the nation to be charged with contempt of it. Such authority could not have been the growth of a day, and it must have rested on a foundation of some solidity to be acknowledged as authoritative at all. But independently of this, the fact remains that in the writings of Hosea, as of all the prophets, the Law is recognized as the great condemning

instrument in the charge which they brought against the nation. Their writings are intelligible, and their mission is inconceivable, but for the fact of a previously existing Law. When Joel, who perhaps is even older than Hosea, says, using the language of the Mosaic Law (2:1), "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain," he witnesses to two facts: first, that Mount Zion had been so long the centre of Divine worship as to be acknowledged as God's *holy mountain*; and secondly, that it was the scene of those ceremonial and festive observances which the Law prescribed. When the last book of the Law was written it was still a matter of uncertainty where the Lord would *place His name*, and no place was permanently fixed until the time of David; but from his time onward, for a period of more than two hundred years, Zion was regarded as the *holy mountain*, and acquired in the minds of the people that degree of sanctity which in the time of Joel it possessed. But in this respect we must remember it had competed successfully and successively with Gibeon, Shiloh and Gilgal. All this was a work of time, but the succession of events not only demands, but supplies the time.

The case, then, stands thus: we have clear reference to the Law 800 B.C. At that time it must have been acknowledged by Israel as well as Judah, and consequently must have dated prior to the division of the kingdom, some two hundred years before. But the same writer (Hosea) makes allusions to the books of Joshua and Judges, which must therefore have been in existence long before his time, and been then accepted as trustworthy history of a much earlier period. But whenever these books were written the Law was still in existence, for it must have preceded them, whatever their date is; and if their narrative is at all to be trusted, the Law was not only known when they were written, but also known at the times to which they related, long before. *Leathes.*

## HOSEA, CHAPTERS I., II., III.

**1:1** THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

**2** When the LORD spake at the first by Hosea, the LORD said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom: for the land doth commit great whoredom,

3 departing from the LORD. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim ; and she  
 4 conceived, and bare him a son. And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel ; for yet  
 5 a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause  
 6 the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I  
 7 will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. And she conceived again, and bare a  
 8 daughter. And the LORD said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah : for I will no more have  
 9 mercy upon the house of Israel, that I should in any wise pardon them. But I will have  
 10 mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save  
 11 them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. Now when she had  
 12 weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. And the LORD said, Call his name Lo-  
 13 ammi : for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

14 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be  
 15 measured nor numbered ; and it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said unto  
 16 them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, *Ye are the sons of the living God.*

17 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall  
 18 appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land : for great shall be the day of  
 19 Jezreel. Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi ; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.

20 Plead with your mother, plead ; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband : and let  
 21 her put away her whoredoms from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts ;  
 22 lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilder-  
 23 ness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst ; yea, upon her children will I have  
 24 no mercy ; for they be children of whoredom. For their mother hath played the harlot : she  
 25 that conceived them hath done shamefully : for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give  
 26 me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, be-  
 27 hold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will make a fence against her, that she shall  
 28 not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them ;  
 29 and she shall seek them, but shall not find them : then shall she say, I will go and return to  
 30 my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I  
 31 gave her the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which  
 32 they used for Baal. Therefore will I take back my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in  
 33 the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered  
 34 her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none  
 35 shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her  
 36 new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies. And I will lay waste her vines  
 37 and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my hire that my lovers have given me :  
 38 and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit  
 39 upon her the days of the Baalim, unto which she burned incense ; when she decked herself  
 40 with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

41 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort-  
 42 ably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for  
 43 a door of hope ; and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the  
 44 day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the  
 45 LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi ; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away  
 46 the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be mentioned by their name.

47 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the  
 48 fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground : and I will break the bow and  
 49 the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will  
 50 betroth thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in  
 51 judgement, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faith-  
 52 fulness : and thou shalt know the LORD. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will an-  
 53 swer, saith the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth ; and the  
 54 earth shall answer the corn, and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall answer Jezreel. And  
 55 I will sow her unto me in the earth ; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained  
 56 mercy ; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people ; and they  
 57 shall say, *Thou art my God.*

58 And the LORD said unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend and an adul-  
 59 tress, even as the LORD loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods, and

2 love cakes of raisins. So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley : and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days ; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife : so will I also be toward thee. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim : afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king ; and shall come with fear unto the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

**Chap. I.** The book opens with events peculiar to Hosea's prophetic ministry—the taking of a wife whose lewdness symbolized the infidelity of the nation to God, their Maker and Husband ; and the birth and naming of children whose names were significant before the people of their relations to Jehovah. The special command of the Lord in this case assumes that the thing required was a hardship—a thing that no good man would be likely to do save under a positive command from God and for a very special purpose. In this view of it the transaction cannot be regarded as immoral in the prophet. Hence the moral objection against it as a reality loses its force.

1. The reader may wisely peruse the history of the period covered by these reigns as recorded 2 K. 14 : 23 to 18 : 12, and also in 2 Chron., chaps. 26-31. The record is a dismal one—revolutions, anarchy, conspiracies, universal idolatry and outbreathing wickedness. H. C. —During the reigns of the four kings of Judah here named, there reigned over Israel Jeroboam II., Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea. The whole space of time thus marked out must, according to the chronological statements in Kings, have been more than sixty years ; while that latter part of Jeroboam's reign, which overlapped the commencement of Uzziah's, could not have exceeded twenty-five.

2. The connection of thought seems to be this : " Go, take for thy wife one who will prove a common prostitute, making thyself thus like Me as married to this nation ; and then see what will be the results of such a connection." The sequel shows what the results would prove : the nation should be ruined in Jezreel ; should cease to be regarded with affection ; should cease to be Jehovah's people. The principal design is to announce prophetically the disastrous consequences which would flow from Israel's unfaithfulness to her God. B. C.

It is well to note carefully that the Lord gave the reasons for this remarkable command—viz., because the land had become wholly adulterous and apostate from God. Of course, adultery here means specially *idolatry*. By the worship of idols the people had put other gods

before Jehovah. They had faithlessly broken their solemn covenant to fear and serve the Lord alone. This covenant can find no better symbol among human relations than that by which one man and one woman " become no longer twain, but one flesh." The marriage relation, closer and more endearing than any other, comes nearest to a perfect symbol of the covenant relation between God and His chosen people. It is therefore used with great beauty and force. The fact is humiliating to the people of God that this symbol should find its most abundant occasion for use, not on the bright side of this marriage relation, but on the dark—the shameful infidelities and apostasies of the people in the times of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The same idea, and mostly on its bright side, underlies the forty-fifth Psalm, and (as the Jews must have understood it) the Book of Canticles ; but its fuller development waited till flagrant sin called it forth. To Hosea was allotted this bitter affliction—a wife unfaithful to her marriage vows—that he might be a living representative of the great sin of the people against their Divine Husband ; and also, that his own experience of domestic wrong and wretchedness might give him a keener sense of the cruel guilt of the nation's idolatry, and might help him to sympathize with the feelings of Jehovah under such abuse. These trials in the prophet's mission have a vital bearing on the question of his essential honesty. No selfish motive could have moved him to such a life-work. To rebuke sin in an age of such outbreathing and universal wickedness, and to be subjected to such domestic affliction for the sake of more vividly illustrating the apostasy of Israel from their God involve and imply an honest, self-sacrificing devotion to the will of God, and quite preclude the supposition of his being an impostor. H. C.

3. *Call his name Jezreel.* Each one of the three children represents Israel viewed in some particular phase, which is described in the name given to the child. The point in this instance is, that Israel is now regarded no longer as " Israel," *Prince with God*, but as " Jezreel," the home of murders and idolatries ; where Ahab and Jezebel had lived, whose crimes had

merited the sanguinary retribution inflicted by Jehu. That the child is so named imports that Israel, as ruled over by the house of Jehu, had become no better than Jezreel had been, full of idolatry and bloodshed. B. C.

6. "*Lo-ruhamah*" is literally "not compassionated"—not a subject of mercy. This use of the negative *Lo* implies not merely the absence of mercy, but the presence of wrath. Here it means that the people had incurred Jehovah's *fioren*. He would not any more show mercy to the people of the Ten Tribes in such form as to arrest and turn aside His impending, long-deserved judgments. On the contrary, He "would utterly take them away" into captivity.

8, 9. "*Lo-ammi*" signifies *not my people*, and as said above of *Lo-ruhamah*, it implies that they are in a state of positive rejection. God was about to disown them—so utterly had they rejected Him by their abounding persistent idolatry, by forsaking the worship of God, and by most flagrant immoralities. How impressive to Hosea must have been all the scenes and sounds of his household! Often as he spake or heard spoken the names of these two children, the thought came: *No mercy! Not my people!* A like testimony it must have borne to the people among whom he was sent as the prophet of the living God.

10, 11. Here is a sudden transition from extreme judgment to the fulness of mercy. "The Lord keepeth not His anger forever." Remarkably is it His method, whether by prophet or apostle, to blend threatening with promise, and to follow the sternest denunciations with outbursts of pity and love. The general sense of the passage is: God hath not forsaken His Church utterly and forever. Notwithstanding this ruin now coming on Israel, the Lord shall yet have a people, countless as the sands, united also and prosperous, the true Israel and Judah. That Israel and Judah "gather together and appoint themselves one head," looks by historical allusion to the sad history of the recent past, since the revolt under Jeroboam, and means to say that in this good time coming, that sore breach shall be healed, the rival kingdoms become one, and "Ephraim no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." The Church of God, in those times, shall be one in love, and strong in its union. The "day of Jezreel" is here the day of the Lord's sowing, or, in our English idiom, *planting* His people—with reference to the etymology of the word Jezreel. Looking historically to the planting in Canaan under Joshua, it means that

God will do a similar thing again. Great shall be the day when the Lord thus lays anew the foundations of His Zion, and rebuilds Jerusalem—plants His people in their new estate, and puts a new face upon His earthly kingdom. It does not necessarily follow that this planting is the locating of His ancient people in the land of Canaan. Paul (Rom. 9: 25, 26) quotes this very passage from Hosea to prove that the "vessels of mercy" to whom God "makes known the riches of His glory," are "not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." That is, he assumes that in this very passage Hosea embraces Gentile Christians under the name Israel. This ought to be decisive. Finally, we have the great fact that just at the point where the Israel of the Ten Tribes was being cast off for their hopeless idolatry and incurable corruption, a larger, richer promise is made to the "children of Israel" than the literal Israel ever had before or since, or ever can have. Moreover, what time the old Israel became lost to history, a new Israel appears; Gentiles come into the Church of God; the world opens to the mission of the Gospel, and lies at the feet of the Prince of Peace: and so His Israel becomes as the sand of the sea; His people are the "sons of the living God;" old antipathies give place to the oneness of love; under their one head, they come up from their last house of bondage, and great beyond all former thought is "the day of Jezreel." H. C.

10. **Sons of the living God.** The Bible reveals a God who sees men and who hears their prayer; who pities them that fear Him, and loves them that trust Him; who protects by His power and guides by His providence them that rely upon Him; who gives wisdom to them that ask it and strength to them that have no might; who provides for all absolute wants; who lifts away the unnecessary burden of anxious care; who imparts courage of heart and fortitude of will to bear every burden and to discharge every duty; who comforts in sorrow and promises victory even in death. All that the human heart craves to fit it for the life of earth is met in the God of the Bible. Every element of spiritual worship in man is evoked by Him, and every spiritual want of man is supplied by Him. There are to be found in Him mercy for the guilty, pardon for the penitent, peace for the troubled, comfort for the sorrowful, guidance for the ignorant, strength for the weak, hope for the despondent, and life for the dying. By all the facts and analogies of the laws of correlation and correspondence in the lower

realms of life, we must confess that a God who is to the heart of man what bread and water are to the body, and who is to the soul of man what light is to the eye, must be the living and true God, to believe in whom is peace, to know whom is power, and to love whom is life. *W. W. McLane.*

**Chap. 2.** In this chapter the Lord exposes and rebukes the sins of His people, and threatens retribution (verses 2-13); then turns to promises of effective discipline and of restoring mercy (verses 14-23). Throughout this chapter the adulterous mother, Israel, is spoken of in the third person, and the Lord declares what He will do to her in judgment and for her in mercy. Remarkably, and as if to give a more impressive sense of her horrible guilt, her children are introduced—are apprised of the unnatural crime of their mother, and are exhorted to plead with her to put away her sins. It is manifestly the purpose of God, in this message by Hosea, to paint a life scene of the crimes of His covenant people in their relations to Himself.

**1.** Say to your brethren, Ammi; to your sisters, Ruhamah. Drop the negative particle from the names, Lo-Ammi, Lo-Ruhamah; sound the sweet words, "*My people*;" "*the pitied and beloved*"—as if to suggest that the heart of the Lord still yearns to make them again His own, and to give the freest flow to His great and deep compassion. *H. C.*

**8.** It was a grievous charge which God here preferred against the Israelites, that His corn and wine and oil, and silver and gold, which He had given them, they employed in the service of Baal, an abominable idol. If, when God giveth us wit, wealth, power, authority, health, strength, liberty, or any other good things, instead of using these things to His glory and the relief of His servants, we abuse them to the service of those idols which we have set up in our hearts, to our pride, our covetousness, or our sensuality, we are as liable to the charge as the Israelites were; as unjust, as profane, as unthankful in every respect as they. *Bp. Sanderson.*

**8, 9.** God cannot allow Himself to be put out of His own world. If men will take His gifts and not thank Him for them; if they will forget His hand, and seize as their own the things which He daily "gives them richly to enjoy," He must remind them of Himself—must, for their sake—by taking away; by "recovering" (as He here calls it)—that is, taking back from the thankless that which the thankful will value. *C. J. Vaughan.*

**11.** This verse is, for the chapter, the transition point between rebuke and threatened retribution for the sins of idol worship on the one hand, and promises of effective discipline and of restoring mercy on the other. "*Behold*," calls special attention to the great things God now proposes to do. "*Therefore*" reminds us to ask *why*? The reasons, viewed fundamentally, lie deeper than the sins of Israel, even in God's covenant love and faithfulness. He cannot bear that His own Israel should sink hopelessly under her sins into ruin. Therefore His pity moves Him to discipline and to mercy. "Will allure her"—in a good sense; persuade her, draw her by the sweet attractions of love. *H. C.*

God's thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely above ours; His reasons are all fetched from within Himself, and not from anything in us; nay, His goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious. Therefore, because she will not be restrained by the denunciations of wrath, God will try whether she will be wrought upon by the offers of mercy. Those whom God has mercy in store for He first brings into a wilderness, into solitude and retirement, that they may the more freely converse with Him out of the noise of this world; into distress of mind, through sense of guilt and dread of wrath, which brings a soul to be quite at a loss in itself and bewildered, and by those convictions He prepares for consolations; and sometimes into outward distress and trouble, by that to open the ear to discipline. He will then allure them, and speak comfortably to them; will persuade them, and speak to their hearts; He will by His word and spirit incline their hearts to return to Him, and encourage them to do so. He will allure them with the promises of His favor, as before He had terrified them with the threatenings of His wrath; will speak friendly to them both by His prophets and by His providences. *H.*

That they might be cast on Him alone, and not become immediately re-entangled in the world's affairs, Israel is not led directly from Egypt to Canaan, but by long journeys through the wilderness, where the life of nature and history stands still, and the people are alone with their God. Since the wilderness is without nourishment, and without so much as a path, the simplest sign of human culture, He undertakes to feed them with manna; He undertakes their guidance in the pillar of cloud and fire, that herein too the people may be directly pointed to Him, and accustomed to the

thought of Him. *Auberlen*.—It is this meaning of the wilderness-wandering of Israel as a process of education which makes it so important, not simply historically, but also religiously; and this is the point of view under which the Old Testament itself—the Pentateuch, and especially Deuteronomy, from which a few chief passages have been brought forward in the text, as well as prophecy—presents the history of the Israelites. In verse 16 the future restoration of Israel is represented as a new guidance through the wilderness. In the preceding passage it is foretold that God will remove Israel into a position of separation, where it can no more have intercourse with the idols to which it has given itself. This is the first stage. And now, verse 14, "Behold, I will entice her, and lead her into the wilderness, and will speak to her heart;" the people shall be placed in a position where they are thrown entirely on God, as Israel was once in the Arabian wilderness, to learn by experience what it has in its God. O.

God afflicts us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. The flowers smell sweetest after a shower; vines bear the better for bleeding; the walnut-tree is most fruitful when most beaten; saints spring and thrive most internally, when they are most externally afflicted. Afflictions are the mother of virtue. Manasseh's chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Luther could not understand some Scriptures till he was in affliction. The Christ-cross is no letter, and yet that taught him more than all the letters in a row. God's house of correction is His school of instruction. All the stones that came about Stephen's ears did but knock him closer to Christ, the cornerstone. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to heaven; and the higher the waters grew, the more the ark was lifted up to heaven. Afflictions lift up the soul to more rich, clear, and full enjoyments of God. "Behold, I will lead her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her," or rather, as the Hebrew has it, "I will earnestly or vehemently speak to her heart." God makes afflictions to be but inlets to the soul's more sweet and full enjoyment of His blessed self. When was it that Stephen saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God, but when the stones were about his ears, and there was but a short step betwixt him and eternity? And when did God appear in glory to Jacob, but in the day of his troubles, when the stones were his pillows, and the ground his bed, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his

canopy? Then he saw the angels of God ascending and descending in their glittering robes. *T. Brooks*.

"I will speak to her heart." How exquisitely natural as well as touching is this language! None but a man in affliction or a God who knows what is in man in affliction would have thought of it. Others speak comfortably to us in sorrow, but if that sorrow is deep, what power have their words? They may be kind words and right words, they may deserve our gratitude and have it, we may feel ashamed of ourselves that they have so little of it; but they can no more get to our hearts when God has really wounded them than they can restore our blessings or raise our dead. *C. Brailley*.

There is a wonderful word in one of the old books which is universally and blessedly true—"I will lead her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart." And they, I think, know comparatively little of the intimacy and the sweetness of Divine companionship who have not passed through the bitter experience of human loneliness. Christ had to take the blind man apart from the crowd before he could give him his sight. Moses had to be called into the dreary desert, with its gloomy peaks and splintered crags of granite, before he could see the great sight; and Elijah had to go to the same lonely district ere to him there came the still, small voice. Friend, if you are condemned to a lonely life, nestle close to God, and the solitude will be full of sweetness and blessedness. There is yet another kind of solitude. Besides the necessary one to catch the personality, and the providential one which God's mercy sometimes flings upon us, there is the voluntary one, without which there is no depth of Christian life and no adequate possession of that Divine Spirit. I know that domestic arrangements and imperative duties make it all but impossible for many Christian people to secure more than a little solitude; but God can also come to a man in a crowd. But for all that, I venture to say that no Christian person can do without some quiet moments with himself and his God. May I still further venture to say that, however useful good conferences for deepening spiritual life may be, solitary communion with Jesus Christ is better, and that, perhaps, if we had fewer congresses and meetings and unions of different kinds, and Christian people accepted more that invitation to "Come, my people, and enter into thy chamber, and shut the door," we should find a deeper possession of power than from the ordinary church meetings and such

like. The voice of the Spirit of God is heard in our closets more than in crowds. A. M.

15. "From thence"—from such a scene of moral discipline, God will give her her vineyards—with historical reference to the grapes of Esheol, which ancient Israel found on entering Canaan. Blessings come after, and out of, efficient moral discipline. "The valley of Achor" is still another historical allusion. The word *Achor* means, by its etymology, *trouble*—in history it was the place of trouble to Achan. (See Josh. 7 : 24-26.) So the troubles of Israel shall be her "door of hope." "And she shall sing there" with declared reference to the joy of the Hebrews when, led by Moses and Miriam, they sang songs of deliverance on the hither side of the Red Sea. So joy comes from sanctified sorrow. Moral discipline that really turns the heart from sin to God is evermore a well-spring of blessings. H. C.

The valley of Achor (that is, of trouble) was a dismal place, and yet it is called here a door of hope. "I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope." So be it with our Achors—with those spots in our lives where sin has found us out, or where great grief and great calamity has come upon us! Pray God to make them, each and all, to us a door of hope. They will be so if we will only, thus late, see God in them. They will be so if they only make us more humble, more lowly in our own eyes, more deeply penitent, more earnest and single-minded, more simple and resolute in our return to Him who is alone the rest and haven and home of the soul, who has long borne our provocations, who has been long tracking us in our wanderings, and who now at length—may He grant it—has overtaken us in the far country, and shall take us home with Him into that house of many mansions where it shall be well with us forever. "The valley of Achor for a door of hope." C. J. Vaughan.

Very beautiful is the lesson that Cecil records when he tells us of his walk in a garden, during a season of painful dejection and gloom on account of a severe trial he was enduring, and his meeting the gardener cutting a pomegranate tree so deeply and severely, that Cecil thought he must have killed the very life out of it; but the gardener told him that the tree had borne no fruit for a long time, and that this deep and as it might seem hazardous cutting was necessary not indeed for its life, but its fruit-bearing life. He was thus treating it, that its branches might be covered with pomegranates. The lesson went to Cecil's heart, as well indeed it might. G. B. C.

The fight may be a long one and it may be a very hard one, but the fight with sin is not hopeless, and it need not be of uncertain issue. The trial may be very severe, and you may say, "Oh, this knife of God, how deep it cuts! It seemed to me, when it touched my heart, as if it would never stop until it went clear through." But, friend, God's pruning-knife never goes by so much as a hair's-breadth further than the necessities of the case require, and the use of it is never for the maiming, but only for the healing of the soul. The discipline, both of temptation and of trial, is intended to leave us richer than we were before—richer than we could have been without its endurance. Temptation and trial, I may say, are God's drill and dynamite to blow up the obstructions that choke the channels of our affections and of our energies until the whole broad stream of God's life shall course through our own and have its own sweet will. Ah! those are strong words that Peter uses when he commands us to rejoice because of our fiery trial, inasmuch as in it we are made partakers of Christ's suffering. Then he lifts the veil for just a moment and shows us that when the Master's glory shall be revealed, when we shall understand the meaning of His discipline with us, as he understands it now, we shall be glad with exceeding joy. *Behrends.*

*Trouble* in some of its thousand forms, *trouble alone*, leads to thoughtfulness about the courses, the aims, the end of life; thoughtfulness about the insufficiency of this world's best, most valued objects; thoughtfulness about God, about the relations sustained to Him, the duties demanded by Him; thoughtfulness about the truth conveyed in His own Word, about the knowledge of Christ as a Saviour and of the Holy Spirit as the Sanctifier; thoughtfulness about sin in its nature, its desert, its forgiveness; thoughtfulness about death, a judgment, an unchangeable state of bliss or woe. And it is *trouble on account of sin*, trouble awakened in the heart itself by such thoughtfulness directed and applied by the Spirit of God; it is *trouble on account of sin* which precedes and leads to the possession of a living hope in the mercy of God. It is a memorable remark of an early commentator that "trouble for sin, if it be sincere, opens a door of hope, for that sin which truly troubles our hearts shall not ruin us." And as it is through trouble we are introduced by the grace of the Divine Spirit into the Christian life, so it is through the same blessed means of trial that we are borne on throughout that life. By trial, as the chief outward means

of God's ordaining, do we go from grace to grace, from strength to strength. The cross is the symbol of our faith, the sign-manual of our Christian profession—the cross of suffering and self-denial. B.

**19, 20.** *I will betroth thee unto Me.* The threefold repetition of these words betokens the solemn joy with which the Divine Bridegroom rests upon the thought of that future marriage. As a betrothal or a marriage was, of course, "forever," the emphatic declaration before us implies that the relation into which Jehovah would now enter with Israel should never again be broken up as it had been before—*i.e.*, that her fidelity should be secured. This is explained by Jer. 31 : 31-34.

*In righteousness, etc.* All these characteristics, as well as that of "faithfulness" in the next verse, attach to Jehovah's own part in this transaction, and not to Israel's. The first pair, "righteousness and judgment," conjoined also in Ps. 89 : 14, where likewise they are followed by "mercy and truth," and in Ps. 97 : 2, point to the hatred of sin and the redeeming and purifying energy with which the Lord will effect the union (cf. Isa. 1 : 27); as on the other hand the next pair, "loving kindness and mercies," point to the tender and sympathizing love with which He will deal with a creature so greatly requiring forbearance. The New Testament revelation throws a clear and intense light upon the import of all this. B. C.

The fulness of the reconciliation between God and the people has never been more beautifully, more completely and more tenderly set forth than in the matchless words of the conclusion of the first parable of the unfaithful wife, "I will betroth thee unto Me forever." The word *betroth* is used, the word suggestive of pure maidenhood, the word which indicates that no past sinful infidelity is to be remembered; all that is forgiven, forgotten, never to be called to mind. "Yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." The parable of the prodigal son even does not equal this as a picture of Divine love, treating the adulterous wife, who wrongs her husband, far more than any prodigal does his father—treating her as though of virgin purity, one who had never sinned. O. T. Student.

**20.** "Thou shalt know the Lord" is one of the most expressive phrases possible to human language, implying to know God in all the great elements of His character and in all the

experiences of His spiritual power; to know with the heart brought fully under the power of Jehovah's presence and love. H. C.

**21, 22.** Setting forth the heavens and the earth as taking part in a grand responsive choral. It should be rendered, "I will respond to the heavens," etc., as conveying the idea of a series of ascending petitions with the descending responses as the return vibration in the combined physical and spiritual movement that is represented in the figure. It is drawn from the responsive musical service of the temple. Nature, as thus responding to God, is a sublime anthem, a grand roll of harmony, with each chord so connected (both simultaneously and in melodious succession) with every other, that the result is a diapason movement, a modulation throughout the immense scale as it is touched from the supernal sphere. It is the same figure in the nineteenth Psalm as brought out by a more poetic, and, on that very account, more literal rendering. T. Lewis.

God will hear the prayer of His people for the earthly good they may need and shall ask of Him. The manner of saying this gives us what we may call a circle of prayer. "Jezreel" stands here for the people whom God plants in the land. Hence the form of the thought is: This people call for corn and wine and oil, and in a sense cry unto these things, and are heard and answered; the corn and wine cry to the earth, the earth to the heavens, and the heavens to God. God hears the heavens; the heavens hear the earth; the earth hears the corn, and the corn hears the people whom God plants in the land. The agencies of Providence that lie between God and His praying people, which must be all put in operation in order to give them corn and wine, are beautifully put into the links of this chain of prayer. H. C.

**23.** The prophecy of this chapter (verses 2-23) closes in the same way as the prophecy chap. 1 : 2-3 : 1 does, with the reversal of the prophetic import of the names of the three typical children. First there is "Jezreel," which, in the former prophecy (chap. 1 : 11), is dealt with only by implication. The name *God-will-sow* needs not to be changed, but only applied differently, and this here is explicitly done. "Israel is *God-will-sow* ; for I will sow her unto Me—*i.e.*, to be My very own, in the land of Israel." In Jer. 31, in which in verses 31-34 we have found the parallel to verses 19, 20 of this chapter, we have again in verses 27, 28 a prediction in which we seem compelled to recognize a distinct reference to and enlarge-



ment of this clause; for "unto Me" is explained by Jeremiah's "I will watch over them, to build and to plant." B. C.

*I will say to them, Thou art My people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.* That mutual interest and possession is the very foundation of all our comfort. He first says, *My people*, calls them so and makes them to be so; and then they say, *my God*. It is, therefore, a relation that shall hold and shall not break, because it is founded upon His choice who changes not. The tenor of an external covenant with a people, as the Jews found, is such as may be broken by man's unfaithfulness, though God remain faithful and true. But the new covenant of grace makes all sure on all hands and cannot be broken; the Lord not only keeping His own part, but likewise performing ours, in us and for us, and establishing us, that as He departs not from us first, so we shall not depart from Him. *I will betroth thee to Me*, says He there, *forever* (verse 19). It is an indissoluble marriage that is not in danger to be broken either by divorce or death. *Lighten*.

**Chap. 3:2.** This buying does not necessarily forbid the supposition that she had been his wife before. It does imply that she had forfeited that relation, and could properly return only as one justly divorced. To show this seems to be the chief or sole intent in this second verse. H. C.—This treatment of Gomer imaged forth the care which Jehovah would take of His people even at the time when they should seem to be no longer the objects of His love. He would keep them in being, and provide for their necessary maintenance, though not in the honor or luxury of a nation enjoying His full favor; and this with a view to their being ultimately restored to the complete possession of their covenanted blessings. B. C.

**3.** Probably the true sense of the verse is better given by omitting the word "*another*," which has nothing to correspond to it in the Hebrew. "Thou shalt not be *for man*"—any man—the special point being to represent a state of Israel described in the next verse as without any worship of either the true God or idols. H. C.

In the covenant of grace, God is ours, and we are His. He makes over Himself to us; and so, by an entire resignation, we are given up to Him. The covenant is like a conjugal contract, and may be illustrated by that of the prophet Hosea (3:3), "Thou shalt be for me, and I will be for Thee." God makes over Himself and all His power and mercy to be-

lievers; so that no dispensation comes to them but in the way of blessing! *T. Manton.*

**4.** It is a very remarkable peculiarity of the prediction in this verse, that while it describes Israel as having neither sacrifice nor oracle, it describes her also as abstaining from image-worship, and even from those forms of Letical or heathenish divination which are known to have been in use among them for a thousand years—from the early times of her patriarchs to the end of her monarchy. This was a future of their condition, which no one could have forecast from anything found in her previous history. It is, therefore, not without point that the prophetic Spirit lays reiterated stress upon this hitherto unknown peculiarity—"no sacrifice and no statue; no ephod and no teraphim." Kimchi recognizes this description in the present condition of his people. "These are the days of the Captivity in which we now are at this day; we have no king nor prince out of Israel; for we are in the power of the nations, and of their kings and princes; and have no sacrifice for God, nor image for idols; no ephod for God that declares future things by Urim and Thummim; and no teraphim for idols, which show things to come, according to the mind of those that believe in them." B. C.

Up to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, they had a polity and governor, a *prince*, whatever might be his title. They have long had none. They offer no sacrifice. They worship no images, being now of all people the most opposed to idolatry. They have no ephod—by which is meant no established priesthood—for the ephod was the holy garment worn by the high priest over the tunic and robe (Ex. 29:5). Neither have they teraphim—a sort of household gods, used especially for purposes of divination. Now, the appointed means for inquiring of God was by the Urim and Thummim, a sort of breastplate worn over the ephod (Ex. 28:30), and thus the ephod itself is often used as equivalent to the Urim (1 Sam. 23:9). It means, therefore, that though the Jews have lost the true means of approaching God to know His will, yet that they do not try to discover that will by any false and superstitious means. No more exact description could possibly be given of the present state of the Jews everywhere. And in this state they are to remain till they accept Christ. When Hosea wrote, he was living under the rule of the last probably of those military usurpers who so often had made the crown of Israel their prize; but the king whom the nation must acknowledge when

they return to Jehovah is David—not personally, for he had long been gathered to his fathers, but David as the symbol of the Messiah, David's Son. And so the Targum (of Jonathan) explains it: "They shall obey Messiah, the Son of David, their King." R. P. S.

4, 5. Here is an exceedingly interesting prophecy, to the effect that the children of Israel shall remain a long time without king or prince, without sacrifice, images, or any insignia of worship, whether true or false, required or forbidden. Cured of idolatry, yet not converted to the worship of the true God, they were to remain long in this peculiar, extraordinary state. Considering how strong their national passion has been to have a king and some established ceremonials of worship, either Di-

vine or idolatrous, this prophecy is surely such as no human sagacity could or would have made. Yet, ever since their own Messiah came in the flesh, or, more definitely, since the fall of their city under the Roman arms (A.D. 70), this has been precisely their condition. "Afterward"—somewhere in the times yet future—"they shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king." Hosea is not alone in giving to David's greater Son the name David. Jeremiah (30 : 9) says: "They shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up to them." Ezekiel likewise (34 : 23, 24 ; 37 : 24, 25). David, considered as king, was a special type of the Messiah, so that the transfer of his name to the latter is natural. H. C.

## HOSEA, CHAPTERS IV., V.

4 : 1 HEAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel : for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God  
2 in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and  
3 committing adultery ; they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land  
4 mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and  
5 the fowls of heaven ; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. Yet let no man  
6 strive, neither let any man reprove ; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.  
7 And thou shalt stumble in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee in the night ;  
8 and I will destroy thy mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge : because  
9 thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me :  
10 seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children. As they were  
11 multiplied, so they sinned against me : I will change their glory into shame. They feed on  
12 the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity. And it shall be, like people, like  
13 priest : and I will punish them for their ways, and will reward them their doings. And  
14 they shall eat, and not have enough ; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase :  
15 because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. Whoredom and wine and new wine  
16 take away the understanding. My people ask counsel at their stock, and their staff declareth  
17 unto them : for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whor-  
18 ing from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense  
19 upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good :  
20 therefore your daughters commit whoredom, and your brides commit adultery. I will not  
21 punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your brides when they commit  
22 adultery ; for they themselves go apart with whores, and they sacrifice with the harlots :  
23 and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown. Though thou, Israel, play the  
24 harlot, yet let not Judah offend ; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven,  
25 nor swear, As the LORD liveth. For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly, like a stubborn  
26 heifer : nor will the LORD feed them as a lamb in a large place. Ephraim is joined to idols :  
27 let him alone. Their drink is become sour : they commit whoredom continually ; her rulers  
28 dearly love shame. The wind hath wrapped her up in its wings ; and they shall be ashamed  
29 because of their sacrifices.

5 : 1 Hear this, O ye priests, and hearken, ye house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king, for unto you pertaineth the judgement ; for ye have been a snare at Mizpah, and a net

2 spread upon Tabor. And the revolvers are gone deep in making slaughter; but I am a re-  
 3 buker of them all. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim,  
 4 thou hast committed whoredom, Israel is defiled. Their doings will not suffer them to turn  
 unto their God: for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the Lord.  
 5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in  
 6 their iniquity; Judah also shall stumble with them. They shall go with their flocks and  
 with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him: he hath withdrawn himself  
 7 from them. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord; for they have borne strange  
 children: now shall the new moon devour them with their fields.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: sound an alarm at Beth-aven;  
 9 behind thee, O Benjamin. Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of rebuke: among  
 10 the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. The princes of Judah  
 are like them that remove the landmark: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.  
 11 Ephraim is oppressed, he is crushed in judgement; because he was content to walk after the  
 12 command. Therefore am I unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.  
 13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then went Ephraim to As-  
 syria, and sent to king Jareb: but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of  
 14 your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of  
 Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver.  
 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in  
 their affliction they will seek me earnestly.

THE rest of the prophecy (chaps. 4-14) is a sort of dirge, consisting of mingled wailings, entreaties, exhortations, threatenings, and promises, and summing up the whole of Hosea's long teaching after Jeroboam's days. It is the necessary consequence of the first three chapters; for they in two brief but telling allegories set plainly forth the sins, especially of idolatry, by which Israel had violated God's marriage covenant, and been repudiated by Him, with mercy, nevertheless, for her in store, but only after long days of widowhood. Those allegories state his whole case; the poem that follows is his lamentation. In it he urges upon the people the consequences of their national sin, first showing them their guilt, both generally, and also class by class; next, in severe and gloomy terms, he sets before them their punishment; and then gradually, though irregularly, he advances to those better hopes and promises with which, too, his parables had ended. And most beautifully are these hopes expressed. R. P. S.

We have in the second part the atmosphere of the dark and distracted age that followed the decease of Jeroboam (4: 1, 2; 5: 1, 2, 13; 7: 7, 11, etc.). Everywhere we are confronted with the lawlessness, the dissoluteness, the plotting factions, the mad dallying with the great powers, and a thousand unmistakable indications of the last years of Israel's decline and decay. But while there can be no hesitation in assigning the whole of this section to the period in question, it is almost a hopeless task to divide it into separate utterances, and

to attach these to particular stages of the downward career of the kingdom. This difficulty is due partly to the peculiar style adopted by the prophet, whose utterances flow on in one long, impassioned monologue, in which we rather dimly divine pauses than clearly discern them. Moreover, the references to contemporary incidents and current circumstances, though numerous and detailed, are too vague to help us much in our extreme ignorance of the actual course of events, which are chronicled in the most summary fashion in the historical books. *Elmslie.*

**Chap. 4.** The Lord sets forth the great sin of the people; charges it largely to the account of the priests, whose flagrant neglects of duty He exposes and denounces (verses 1-11); shows that idolatry is folly (v. 12), and begets licentiousness (verses 13, 14). He solemnly warns Judah to avoid the sin and doom of Ephraim (verses 15-19). H. C.

**1.** *Because there is no truth, nor mercy.* Integrity and mercy or compassionate sympathy make up the sum of man's duty to man. *Knowledge of God.* That consciousness of what God is, both in Himself and in His relations to us (cf. note on chap. 6: 3), which leads to practical conformity with His will. (So chap. 6: 6. Cf. Jer. 22: 16; Isa. 11: 9.) Compare the triad of virtues enumerated in Micah 6: 8. B. C.

That knowledge which is before and beyond all other—which is the first, and ever the greatest want of a thinking soul, and which is also the consummation of all knowledge, in time and in eternity—the knowledge of God

in the grandeur of His attributes, in the mystery of His triune nature revealed in Christ, in the glory of His holiness, in the excellency of His love, in His paternal goodness, in His redeeming mercy, in His pledged and everlasting grace; *this* is the wisdom that Christ brings to the humblest of His disciples. What matters it to have climbed the heights of mountains, and compassed the earth, if there be no heights of glory for the soul beyond? What matters it to have sounded the sea and have gathered its treasures if the soul shall never stand upon the sea of glass before the throne? What matters it to have visited upon beams of light the outmost planet, and have measured the stars, if for the disembodied spirit there shall be no wings of love to bear it to a celestial home? What matters it to have analyzed the constitution of the soul if the great wants of that soul, as a spiritual and immortal existence, shall be forever unsatisfied? The wisdom that Christ brings, that Christ is, is the wisdom that man ever needs, but had never found. It is the wisdom of God; the being, the attributes, the character, the works, the government, the purposes, and, above all, the emotions, the desires and the promises of God toward man, all truly and fully displayed; and while it is no newly created faculty within the soul, it *is* that soul itself in all its faculties, quickened and purified to behold, to honor, to love, and to enjoy God as He is. This is that wisdom which is the life of the soul. "For this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." J. P. T.

2. The Hebrew of this verse is a model of brevity and force; its infinitives absolute, standing naked and as compact as possible. "Swearing, lying, murdering, stealing, committing adultery," they are outbreathing in all. Scorning restraint, they break over all bounds. "Blood toucheth blood" in the strong sense that the streams from the first murdered man meet and mingle with the streams from the second, and scarcely can there be found a spot clean of the gore of murder. II. C.

*Swearing.* The Hebrew verb (*alah*, derived from a noun meaning "God") denotes the use of God's name, both for taking an oath and for execration; and as endeavors were sometimes used to cast evil spells upon others by imprecation, it is not improbable that the impious use of God's name in cursing is here intended as well as perjury. It perhaps also includes a large use of those unnecessary oaths, which have been so strongly condemned by our Lord and by James. B. C.

Some sins are productive of temporary profit or pleasure; but profaneness is productive of nothing unless it be shame on earth and damnation in hell. It is the most gratuitous of all kinds of wickedness; a sort of peppercorn acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the devil over those who indulge it. *Edwards*.—The vilest, cheapest, most causeless and utterly irrational of all vices is the vice of profanity. It affords no pleasure, yields no profit, gratifies no natural appetite, commands no man's respect, betrays an ignorant, vulgar, poverty-stricken mind, as well as an utter lack of good-breeding, and paves the way to sure and irremediable demoralization of character. *New York Observer*.—In hearing some men swear, the hearer is almost converted to the old doctrine of demoniac possession. What most impresses us is the utter senselessness, the pure insanity of his curses and maledictions. For it is the Almighty that this "aspiring lump of animated dirt" blasphemes. The folly of it can only be fitly described in that energetic and vivid passage in which Dr. South draws the contrast between the power of the offender and the Divine object of his puny wrath: "A man so behaving himself," he says, "is nothing else but weakness and nakedness setting itself in battle array against Omnipotence; a handful of dust and ashes sending a challenge to all the host of heaven. For what else are words and talk against thunderbolts; and the weak, empty noise of a querulous rage against Him who can speak worlds, who could word heaven and earth out of nothing, and can, when He pleases, word them into nothing again." *E. P. Whipple*.

4. Worst of all is the hopeless moral infatuation of the people. It is all in vain for one man to reprove another for sin. The people are like him who resists the judicial decisions given by the priest acting as judge, under God (De. 17: 12).

5. This abrupt change of person to direct address is for the sake of greater force. "Thou"—the people—"shalt fall," by awful judgments from God. "The prophet" here is the false prophet who had misguided and deluded the people, and must perish with them. II. C.

6. *For lack of knowledge.* The "knowledge" here spoken of is not a speculative, but a practical knowledge; not only a knowledge of the letter or sense of the law, but the framing of their lives according to it. The end of His giving them His laws and commandments was that they might so know them as to keep and do them; that was reckoned their "wisdom

and understanding" (De. 4: 6); and the doing according to His commandments He declares to be the knowledge of Him (Jer 22: 16). It is very observable how the sin and the punishment run parallel and are proportioned one to the other. The crimes objected are that they "rejected knowledge," and that they "forgot the law of their God." The punishment proportioned to the first, that He also would "reject" them, that they should be "no priests to Him;" to the second, that He would also "forget their children." *Pocock.*

God's *forgetting* their children means more than it expresses. For God to *forget* to protect and bless is to give up to unmingled curses. The turn given in this language is fearfully significant of retribution. The Hebrew makes God's agency emphatic: "I, yea, I, will forget thy children."

7. "They" refers to the priests. The "increase" might be either in numbers or in wealth and honor; probably not either alone, but all. The more they prospered, by so much the more they sinned against God. II. C.

8. *They cut up the sin of My people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.* The meaning is, that it was their ordinary custom, under pretence of the right of their office, to receive from the people their sin offerings, and to feed upon them. At the same time, "they set their heart on their iniquity"—that is, they were desirous that the people should commit sin, that so the sin offerings might come in to them. *Pocock.*

8. 9. Unsanctified subtlety often proves a great curse to a man; and the more crafty men are to do evil the more mischief they do, and, consequently, they shall receive greater damnation. Subtle tempters are the most accursed creatures under the sun. II.—Are these strong deliverances true? According to the tenor of Scripture, they are. Then terrible must be the judgment and not the displeasure of God against those who employ intellect, wealth, social position, and the seductive arts of fashionable life to beguile weaker companions into the indulgence of sinful pleasures. *J. F. Mason.*

9. God will bring judgments upon them that shall be the destruction both of priest and people; the famine that deprives the people of their meat shall deprive the priests of their meat offerings (Joel 1: 9). It is part of the description of an universal desolation, that it shall be as with the people, so with the priest (Isa 24: 2). God's judgments, when they come with commission, will make no difference.

Sharers in sin must expect to be sharers in ruin. Thus God will punish them both for their ways, and reward them their doings. God will cause their doings to return upon them—so the word is; when a sin is committed, the sinner thinks it is gone and he shall hear no more of it, but he shall find it called over again and made to return, either to his humiliation or to his condemnation. II.

Is it not true that the religious condition of a church, and that of its leaders, teachers, pastors, ever tend to be the same, as that of the level of water in two connected vessels? There is such a constant interaction and reciprocal influence that uniformity results. Either a living teacher will, by God's grace, quicken a languid church, or a languid church will, with the devil's help, stifle the life of the teacher. Thank God that when His Church lives on a high level of devotion, it has never wanted for single souls who have towered even above that height. Alas! for the leaders who have rayed out formalism, and have chilled down the Church to their own coldness, and stiffened it to their own deadness! A. M.

10. Resuming from verse 8 their eating the sins of the people, God now declares: They shall eat, but shall get no good of it; this being the sense of the words rendered "not have enough;" literally, "shall not be satisfied." II. C.—They shall eat, and not have enough. Though they have great plenty by the abundance of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield no good nourishment, or their greedy appetites shall not be satisfied with it. What is unlawfully gained cannot be comfortably used; no, nor that which is inordinately coveted; it is just that the desires which are insatiable should always be unsatisfied; and that those should never have enough who never know when they have enough. II.

11. The drunkard hath no sense of the difference between good and evil. His reason, his understanding, his conscience, is gone; and therefore all sins are alike to him. Hence it is that this sin never goes alone, but has a great train of other sins always following it; inasmuch that it cannot so properly be called one single sin, as all sins in one. *Bp. Beveridge.*

12. *Their staff declareth unto them.* As if it were, "He looks to his stick to tell him what to do." The juxtaposition of "stock" meaning an idol, leads us to take "staff" as meaning a staff having for its top a little idol. B. C.

13. Thus far in this chapter the sins of Israel, the Ten Tribes, have been portrayed.

Here the prophet turns to admonish Judah to shun such crime and its consequent ruin. Gilgal was one of the centres of idol worship, as was also Beth-aven, house of vanity, which was probably the place long known as Bethel—house of God. The change of name represents the change from the worship of Jehovah to the worship of mere nothings, vanities. Both Gilgal and Bethel had been associated with the true worship of God; Gilgal ever since the rolling up of the heap of stones there on entering Canaan, and the circumcision of all the people there (Josh. 4 : 20 ; 5 : 9), and Samuel's holding his circuit court there (1 Sam. 7 : 16); and Bethel, from that eventful night when the Lord met the youthful Jacob there (Gen. 28 : 16-19). This appropriation of God's house (Bethel) to the devil's worship is one of his own Satanic arts, kept up through all time. "Nor swear," in the profane way of idol worshippers, "The Lord liveth." It seems to have been common to blend with idolatry some of the forms of recognizing the true God. This he abhorred.

**16.** The figure supposes a young heifer under the yoke (for the female was put to real work in the East), but resisting, refractory, jerking her head away, and running back—a very different sort of action from that gradual down-hill sliding which is commonly associated with the English word backslide. It is unfortunate that the word backslide, taken from the Bible to describe a state of Christian experience, should by usage fall so far short of the Bible sense. It means here that Israel is persistent, stubborn, half frantic in her rebellion against God—a state of heart and life utterly far from true piety. Now—*i.e.*, very soon, the Lord will give Israel a vast range of wilderness for her wanderings—will cast her forth from her land as a lamb might be cast forth from his secure and peaceful fold, to roam at large, homeless and unprotected. The passage predicts the captivity of the Ten Tribes to Assyria, but keeps up the figure of the refractory heifer, only changing from the heifer to the lamb as being more defenceless, and more wretched when lost and wandering alone. The heifer tears herself away; God lets her go, a wandering lamb, into a hopeless captivity.

**17. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.** The Hebrew word for idols implies things made with the toilsome but fruitless labor of human hands. Ephraim is *joined* to them in the strong sense of being closely united and *adhering*, so to speak, to those senseless things. "Let him alone," cannot, *in this*

*connection*, be the declaration of God's purpose to abandon Ephraim and withdraw His Spirit, but is God's command to Judah to desist from all society with Ephraim and leave him to sin and suffer alone. II. C.—No means should be used to bring them to repentance; Ephraim is joined to idols, is in love with them, and addicted to them, and therefore, let him alone, as verse 4. Let no man reprove him. Let him be given up to his own heart's lusts, and walk in his own counsels; we would have healed him, and he would not be healed, therefore forsake him. It is a sad and sore judgment for any man to be let alone in sin, for God to say concerning a sinner, "He is joined to his idols, the world and the flesh, he is incurably proud, covetous, or profane, an incurable drunkard or adulterer, let him alone; conscience, let him alone; minister, let him alone; providences, let him alone. II.

"Let me alone!" says the defiant soul to the infinite Jehovah. "Let him alone!" cries the Almighty concerning the resisting, despising sinner, addressing all the agencies and appliances by which the wandering soul is influenced to return unto Him, all the influences of grace and truth employed and exerted by the Holy Spirit in the soul's restoration to childship and likeness to God. When the fiat goes forth, all these shall be withdrawn from the stubbornly resisting sinner. B.

Let none defer the work of God to a more convenient season; no season can possibly arrive so convenient as the present; difficulties will only increase by repeated habits of neglect; they can never be so small as they are now. The chains of sin will only be riveted by wearing; until God will wait no longer for the procrastinating trifler, but say, as He said by the prophet, "Let him alone; he is joined to idols; let him alone!" This has been the ruin of millions. It is but few that deliberately reject religion; their sin and ruin lie in procrastination; they look forward to a day of repentance that never arrives! *R. Hall.*

Aside from the uncertainty of life, the distraction of sickness, the blindness of dotage, there is another circumstance which increases the improbability of future repentance. It is the accumulation of power which every habit of sin is acquiring, the longer it is indulged. Conscience is an easily offended monitor, and the reproof that is slighted to-day is more feebly uttered to-morrow, and the third day its whispers may be too low to wake up the lethargy of the soul. The sins which you cling to now will cling to you hereafter, and the work

which early attended to would have been comparatively like the putting off of a garment, will become at length like the plucking out of a right eye or the cutting off of a right hand. God's spirit will come less frequently to the heart that is only hardened by His influences, and which at every slighted visit is the more strengthened to resist His future solicitations. Do not expect that amid all these discouraging circumstances, after this protracted career of guilt, a Divine hand will be upon you to draw you back to the commencement of your journey; to remove at once the fixedness of your sin. The Spirit of God, when it acts at all, operates in harmony with your own agency. "It doth persuade" you, while you can listen and ponder and understand. It presents truth to the eye, and it fixes the eye upon it. The more dimmed has become the vision by sinful indulgence, the more difficult will be the conversion by the truth. Ah! is there not such a thing as a total blindness even in this life, which no Divine influence will cure. The Spirit is kind and compassionate; it takes a long while to grieve Him utterly away; but He will not strive forever. When the soul, as it were, immures itself in dungeon walls, He will find some crevice to let in the light; but when every aperture is closed, and the doors are barred and bolted with a strength that yields to no knocking, then sadly, indeed, but surely the Spirit takes His eternal flight. "There is a sin unto death." In every man's destination there is a limit beyond which if he go, he is lost forever. *Homer.*

Oh, where is this mysterious line of God's forbearance? One may stand on one side of it at one moment and cross it the next. One may reach it after years of walking; another, while his step has lost nothing of its youthful spring. But if there be one who remembers the seasons of the Spirit's power within his soul; if there be one who cannot compute (because their number is so large) his stifled convictions; if there be one who in view of the truth of God has thought oft and deeply upon the concerns of his soul; if there be one who, though he could not resist the evidence of the truth, brought home to him by the messenger of the truth in his Sabbath argument, has yet often resisted the truth itself, oh, surely we may say of him, that he is standing on the mysterious threshold, to cross which is to enter upon a region of hopelessness and death! And a conscience every day getting weaker because the unseen author of its remonstrances is every day lifting a feeble voice, shall be to him the proof of the

assertion. Conscience will have its last conviction; the Son of God will knock for the last time at the door of the heart; the Spirit of truth will move for the last time over the soul. Amid all these convictions, and knockings, and strivings some one must be the last. *E. Mason.*

The Gospel from the first acted as a moral test to all to whom it came. It put to the proof their honesty, sincerity, earnestness. It was always first received by the good and devout—by those who had in them something in harmony with itself; or it stirred the soul, and then met such as, "moved by fear," or "resolutely bent on eternal life," were thus prepared to welcome the good news. If men were morally aroused, or if they were sincere seekers after truth, or really wished to do the will of God, Christianity would take them by the hand, speak to them in tender and loving tones, lead them into the light, "show them the doctrine," and cause them to perceive and know "that it was of God." If, on the contrary, they were sensual, indifferent, volatile—vain in their reasonings, proud, presumptuous, touching with rude and unhallowed hands sacred and Divine things—scorners, mockers, disposed to find reasons for denial or rejection—to such the Gospel would say—in the sense of spiritually revealing—*nothing*; it would maintain a dignified silence; would "let them alone," and suffer them to be self-deceived. *T. Binney.*

**19.** The whirlwind affords a common figure for those providential agencies with which God overwhelms and sweeps away the wicked. (See Ps. 58:9; Prov. 1:27; Isa. 40:24; 66:15, etc.) Here a bold poetic imagination gives to the whirlwind real life, and wings in which the guilty nation is enfolded, to be borne away to its final doom—captivity. Zechariah (5:5-11) has the same figure in a slightly different dress. "They shall be confounded because of their sacrifices" to idol gods which cannot save. Their objects of confidence shall utterly fail them; the idols in which they trusted shall prove their curse. So evermore must all the hopes of the wicked perish! That on which they rely for help shall become the millstone to sink them—the fire to scorch and blast them forever! *H. C.*

And then they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices; ashamed of their sin in offering sacrifice to idols; ashamed of their folly in putting themselves to such an expense upon gods that have no power to help them, and thereby to make that God their enemy who has almighty power to destroy them. Those that have sacrificed their time, strength, honor and

all their comforts to the world and the flesh will shortly be ashamed of it. Yea, and those that bring to God blind, and lame, and heartless sacrifices will be ashamed of them too. II.

**Chap. 5.** In general, the course of thought is the same in this chapter as in the fourth; rebukes for sin, threatening of near judgments, in which God's own hand should be specially manifest. Judah is spoken of more frequently than in chap. 4, and hence, Judah being less hardened than Ephraim, the strain of remark gives more intimations of hopeful repentance.

**2.** The Lord assures them that their sacrifice of animals after the law of Moses, whether mixed up with idol worship and all manner of wickedness, or standing by itself, yet used as a cloak for their sin, would avail them nothing. They might go deep into it; it could be accounted only as so much the greater sin, and could by no means screen them from the judgments of God. H. C.

I have been a rebuker of them all. The prophet had been so, a reprovcr by office; he had many a time told them of the evil of their ways and doings, had dealt plainly with them all, and had not spared either the priests or the house of the king. God Himself had been a Rebuker of them all by their own consciences and by His providences. Sins against reproof are doubly sinful (Prov. 29: 1). II.

**3.** True it is that men only insult God the more when they assume that they can cover up sin by the forms of religion. To assume that God cannot see through this covering is an insult to His omniscience; to assume that He can ever accept such hypocrisy is an insult to His holiness.

**4.** A great moral truth lies here—that when men have given themselves up heartily to sin and the spirit of sinning rules, and they do not care to know God, then they will not make any honest efforts to turn to God; they will not shape their external doings so as to facilitate the turning of their hearts from sin to holiness. The reason why they will not is given here—the spirit of sinning is in them as the ruling power of their heart and life. They have not known the Lord and do not intend to think or to learn of Him. H. C.

They would not turn to God, though He is their God, theirs in covenant, by whose name they have been called and whom they are obliged to serve. They would not return to the worship of Him from which they had turned aside. Nay, they would not frame their doings to turn to God. They would not consider their ways, nor apply their minds to think

of those things that would bring them to God. It is true we cannot by our own power, without the grace of God, turn to Him; but we may by the due improvement of our own faculties and the aid of His Spirit frame our doings to turn to Him. Those that will not do that, that prepare not their hearts to seek the Lord, owe it to themselves that they are not turned, they die because they will die; and to those that will do this further grace shall not be wanting. II.

**5.** The pride of Israel is a true witness against him to the point here charged; for pride seals the evidence that the heart is hardened and perverse. When a sinner is proud in his sin and of his sin, he gives the strongest evidence of being fully committed and awfully hardened. Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall under the judgments of God. Judah comes in here, and henceforward through the chapter, as having shared in the guilt of Ephraim, and consequently as bound to share her doom. H. C.

They shall fall in their iniquity. This follows upon their pride testifying to their face, therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity. Pride will have a fall; it is the certain presage and forerunner of it; they that exalt themselves shall be abased. The face in which pride testifies shall be filled with confusion. They shall not only fall, but fall in their iniquity, the saddest fall of all other. Their pride kept them from repenting of their iniquity, and therefore they shall fall in it. Those that are not humbled for their sins are likely to perish forever in their sins. It is added, Judah also shall fall with them in their iniquity; as the Ten Tribes were carried captive into Assyria for their idolatry, so the two tribes, in process of time, were carried into Babylon for following their bad example; but the former fell, and were utterly cast down, the latter fell, and were raised up again. Judah had the temple and priesthood, and yet that shall not secure them, but if they sin with Israel and Ephraim, with them they shall fall. H.

**6.** In the day of their calamity they may summon to their help the most costly forms and services of religious worship, but all in vain. There comes a time when it is too late to cry even for mercy. The Scriptures repeatedly affirm this awful truth, as *e.g.*, Prov. 1: 24-31. When mercy has been abused too long, and patience in God ceases to be a virtue, then retribution must take its course—else law were a farce, and the throne of justice would sink into contempt. H. C.



**8.** In the line of hill summits between Jerusalem and Bethel Gibeah and Ramah are prominent. So the prophet represents an alarm sounded out from Jerusalem, as passed on from one of these signal stations northward to another, exclaiming, "Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah and the trumpet in Ramah; cry aloud at Beth aven (Bethel), behind thee, O Benjamin!" *N. C. Bart.*

**11.** Ephraim is crushed utterly under the Divine judgments because he heartily consented to walk after the commandment of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who bade the people worship the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan (1 K. 12:28-33). This is the commandment referred to as the first fatal step—the occasion of the sad relapse which was so soon to end in the utter ruin of the people and the kingdom.

**13.** Ephraim (2 K. 15:19, 20), threatened by Pul, king of Assyria, "gave him a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand." Judah (2 K. 16:7), threatened by Rezin of Syria, sent to Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for help. In neither case was this call for help of any avail. *II. C.*

**14.** If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by His graces and comforts stays with us, it is well enough; but our condition is sad indeed if He tear and go away; if, when He deprives us of our creature comforts, He does Himself depart from us. When He goes away He will take away all that is valuable and dear, for when God goes, all good goes along with Him. He will take away, and none shall rescue him; as the prey cannot be rescued from the lion (Mic. 5:8). None can be delivered out of the hands of God's justice but those that are delivered into the hands of His grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker. *II.*

**15.** God elsewhere declares, "that He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." God withdraws Himself from His people, not that He would finally reject them, but that they might know their wickedness and folly in rejecting and forsaking Him, and so "acknowledge their offence, and seek His face." *Powell.*

**In their affliction they will seek**

**Me.** It may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God that had long gone astray from Him and kept at a distance. Therefore God for a time turns away from us, that He may turn us to Himself and then return to us. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. *II.*—Prayer is one design of trouble. God has an end in afflicting us worthy His wisdom and goodness, and this end He accomplishes—He brings the people whom He loves to His throne. "I will go and return to my place," He says, "till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face;" and then He adds, "In their affliction they will seek Me early."

*C. B.*

It is for the inward strife with sin, the struggle with pride and appetite and passion, with sloth and sensual indulgence, with all the forms of selfishness—this strife *with self* in order to *conquest over self*—it is for *this* that anxiety and trouble, pain and disappointment, disease and bereavement are sent upon every soul. They alone, as *Divine instruments*, successfully withstand the force of selfish desire and guilty pursuit. And through this warfare and victory every Divine grace is quickened and augmented in its power over the heart. When Pleasure's spell is broken before adversity then is the humble heart bowed and *broken* before God. When its earthly props are removed, then does the believing soul cling more closely to its heavenly support. When worldly expectations fade, then do the Spirit's hopes cluster around that inheritance which fadeth not. When time's frail, perishing objects fall from our grasp, then do we take firmer hold of *eternal* realities. We live, we *act* more for God, for eternity, for heaven! Thus, through suffering, God endues the Christian soul with a larger measure of the graces of His Spirit. *Through* pain and sorrow He gives vigor to the Christian's energies, efficiency and success to all his efforts for higher spiritual attainments. He imparts elevation to his thoughts, purity to his purposes, strength and glow to his affections, grandeur to his hopes, and produces his rapid advancement in the Divine life. "Before I was afflicted," says David, "I went astray, but *now* have I kept Thy word." *B.*

## HOSEA, CHAPTER VI.

6:1 COME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he  
 2 hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he  
 3 will raise us up, and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know  
 the LORD: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as  
 the latter rain that watereth the earth.  
 4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your  
 5 goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away. Therefore have I  
 6 hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judge-  
 7 ments are as the light that goeth forth. For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the  
 8 knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like Adam have transgressed the  
 9 covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. Gilead is a city of them that  
 10 work iniquity, it is stained with blood. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the  
 11 company of priests murder in the way toward Shechem: yea, they have committed lewd-  
 ness. In the house of Israel I have seen an horrible thing: there whoredom is found in  
 Ephraim, Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, there is an harvest appointed for thee, when I  
 bring again the captivity of my people.

**Chap. 6.** In this chapter we have calls to repentance, assurances of God's great mercy, but this mercy is grieved by the fickleness of God's degenerate people. It closes with continued details of aggravated wickedness.

1. With unsurpassed beauty and force the Lord Himself gives His people the very words with which they may exhort each other to return to Him. The marvel is that in the figure the Lord is no more the lion, but an angel of mercy, coming down to bind up the wounds Himself has made! And it is He Himself that declares this—testimony, therefore, that could not be better. Indeed, we could not reasonably accept any other. For who else could know, or who else could make us believe, that the same God who hath torn will also heal—the same who hath smitten will also bind up? Such are the wondrous things of God's mercy. II. C.

We live under an economy of which sorrow is a part, but of which God's healing is also a part. We are under the care of Jehovah that healeth; a wise healer, a tender healer, a thorough healer. The alternation of joy and sorrow in our life is not accidental, it obeys a law; it is all regulated, the joy and the sorrow alike, by infinite wisdom and infinite love. Healing has a lesson as well as sorrow; it is not an end unto itself, not an encouragement to indolence and slackness, but a monition pointing us to make use of recovered tone and strength on the path of duty and ministry. God, in calling Himself our Healer, appeals to no sickly sentiment in us. Healing means more toil and more burdens and more conflict, and these will con-

tinue to the end. But let us remember that God never forgets to give rest along the road, and refreshment at the right places to His faithful ones. Even on earth there will be intervals of sweet rest, though the desert lie on beyond. After Marah came Elim with palms and abundant wells, shade and flowing waters, and they were suffered to encamp there by the wells and to stay awhile. By and by the desert will be passed, the palms of the heavenly Elim will rise into view, and the faithful shall walk with the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, who shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God—the Lord that healeth—shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. *Vincent.*

2. The language of the verse finds its just and complete application in the hopes expressed by those penitent Israelites, whose posture of mind the prophet is here dramatically setting forth. In all ages, however, Christian piety has generally recognized in its wording a reference to our Lord's resurrection. There's nothing in the New Testament to constrain us so to apply the passage; for, so far as appears, it makes no allusion to it. Nevertheless, a believer in Christ, without fearing any censure from sound criticism, may be bold to surmise, that "the Spirit of Christ which was in Hosea" did prompt him so to fashion his utterance as in an allusive manner to turn the thoughts of those who in future ages should repent toward that great event. The death and burial of Christ as "made sin for us," succeeded "on the third day" by His resurrection, is, in fact,

for all penitents, the sole and certain ground of their being freed from the state of sin and condemnation and rising again to live in God's sight. Since therefore it was to be by virtue of Christ's being raised from the dead on the third day that penitents were to be "raised up" from their spiritual misery, it may well be believed that the Holy Spirit suggested the designation of time, which is here given and which is certainly remarkable, with an oblique reference to the resurrection of the Saviour of the world. B. C.

Though He forsake for a small moment, He will gather with everlasting kindness. The people of God may not only be torn and smitten, but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so, nor shall they long lie so; God will in a little time revive them; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return, and adhere to Him. H.

3. The text sets forth with great simplicity the manner in which Divine knowledge and experience, growth in grace and the knowledge of Christ, is to be successfully sought, while it illustrates in two similes of singular beauty the results thereby attained. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord; His going forth is prepared as the morning"—*i.e.*, He sheds a steady and culminating radiance upon the path of the soul, "and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth"—*i.e.*, the effect of the knowledge of God divinely imparted shall be to distil refreshing, fructifying influences upon the heart. The manner in which Divine knowledge and experience is successfully sought is by following on to know the Lord. The single idea it conveys is plainly that of persistent, steadfast effort in pressing forward. It intimates with the utmost distinctness the single condition of progress in religion so far as dependent on human agency to consist in the unremitting exertion of all the soul's powers in the active pursuit of Divine knowledge and experience. By no uncertain implication it declares that the Christian's progress depends not upon miracle or the interposition of supernatural agency in producing strange, startling impressions upon the mind, nor upon the mere exercise of Divine sovereignty, the exertion of absolute, irresistible power in carrying on the process of transformation in the heart, nor yet upon passive participation in outward ordinances or ceremonies of a formal worship. It affirms that the soul's advancement in spiritual knowledge and holiness is to be achieved not

by any *passive* waiting for God, or by any formal posture of spiritual indolence or inaction, but simply by *unceasing personal attention to the means of knowledge and grace furnished in the revealed Word and the accessible mercy-seat of Jehovah, by active waiting upon and efficient working with God in connection with these means*. It asserts, in a word, that the requisites essential to the soul's growth in knowledge and grace are all included in faithful, steadfast effort in seeking and using these divinely provided means. B.

These words were, no doubt, fulfilled in many a deliverance of the Jewish people; but their own most ancient commentators find their last fulfilment in the great promised Messiah, to whom all the prophets gave witness. The promises of the Old Testament are waves which urge each other on, to rise and fall in many a deliverance, until at length they break on the great shore of all safety—the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory. And it would surely be a shame for us Christians to do less than ancient Jewish doctors did, to fail in finding here a prophecy of the world's Redeemer. It is Christ, then, whom our faith must grasp under these two figures, the *Day-dawn* and the *Rain*. There must be something of common likeness in them, for they both apply to the same great Person, and yet there must be something distinctive meant to be conveyed, for the Word of God uses no vain repetitions, no mere figures of rhetoric. When we come to the New Testament, we find clearly revealed what the ancient prophets dimly suggested. There is a twofold coming of the Son of God, the first in His own person to establish and confirm the Gospel, the second in His Holy Spirit to apply to the heart. The one of these may very fitly be compared to the morning, the other to the rain. Indeed, these are the two figures most frequently used in this connection all through the Bible. Christ Himself is the Light of the world, the Sun of Righteousness. His Spirit is poured forth as floods on the thirsty. *Rev.*

"We shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord." So the words may be rendered. Those who know a little of Jesus' love, and are but just brought acquainted with His free grace and salvation shall hold on their way. Knowledge, light, peace and love shall increase to their souls, through that Spirit by whom they are regenerated and born again. Though at first they are but "babes in Christ, yet, through the milk of the word, they shall grow and increase with the increase of God." The going forth of Christ's love toward us is as the morn-

ing. At the dawn of day light is scarcely discernible; it seems opposed by surrounding darkness, yet gradually increases, till the sun gains its meridian. So "the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And He will also "come unto us as the rain," to refresh, enliven, and make our souls fruitful in knowledge, peace, love and holiness; yea, as "the latter and former rain." *W. Mason.*

Every nearer approach to a lucid thing infers (to us) an increase of light from it. We should therefore be following on to know the Lord, and we shall see His going forth will be before us as the morning. He will be still visiting us with renewed, increasing light, for such is morning light, fresh and growing light, and ere long it will be perfect day. Labor we to improve our knowledge of God to such a degree of acquaintance as our present state can admit of; to be as inward with Him as we can, to familiarize ourselves to Him. *Hosee.*

Observe how clear the light is along our path of duty. Everything necessary to the performance of our task is supplied in fullest abundance. Not only all necessary knowledge, but hope, encouragement, inducement, commendation, the evils which will follow neglect, all the elements of courage, zeal, fortitude, endurance, faithfulness as against obstacles and temptations. We can walk in no path of life, and in no part of any path in which we shall not have a sure word of prophecy, a light in the darkness, a lamp to our feet. The lamp illumines the path from childhood to old age down into the shadows of death and beyond. We clearly see the path far enough beyond the valley of death for us to know that in following it we shall ascend the eternal hills. *Interior.*

The light of glory is to reward the victory obtained by the conduct of the light of grace. God in great mercy even here begins the reward. They that *follow on to know the Lord* usually find such increase of light, not consisting in vain notions, but in the quickening and comforting knowledge of God, as greatly encourages them, and draws them still on to seek more. *Baxter.*

We are as dependent upon God now as then for the early and the latter rain, for the showers that water and refresh the earth. Equally dependent are we for those influences of the Holy Spirit by which Christ in all His preciousness and graciousness is communicated to the soul. Blessed is the man whose soul has been brought under this gracious baptism of the Spirit, to whom Christ has thus come as the rain! The roots of his religious life are fed. The foun-

tains of spiritual energy in his soul are replenished. The leaves of his Christian profession are cleansed and made verdant. The flowers of all saintly charity are made to blossom, and the fruits of all holy endeavor to ripen. *T. D. Witherspoon.*

Going with Him, following Him wherever He leads, without question, without condition, without reserve, not counting the cost, that was the way His first disciples followed Him. That is the way His disciples must follow Him now. Absolute obedience to Him is the condition of following. J. R. M.—All true knowledge which is not mere empty notions naturally tends to influence action, and all true action naturally tends to confirm the knowledge from which it proceeds. Obedience gives insight: "If any man wills to do My will, he shall know of the doctrine." If I am faithful up to the limits of my present knowledge, and have brought it all to bear on character and conduct, I shall find that in the effort to make my every thought a deed. I see some things clearly that were faint and doubtful before. Moral truth becomes dim to a bad man. Religious truth grows bright to a good one, and whosoever strives to bring all his creed into practice and all his practice under the guidance of his creed will find that the path of obedience is the path of growing light. A. M.

The doctrines and truths of Christianity belong to the sphere of the religious life and to the experience of the spirit within us, and are to be tested and verified within the sphere with which they are concerned. Chemical properties may be established by experiment in the laboratory; historical facts are tested by the comparison of independent records; but spiritual things are spiritually determined and discerned. Religious doctrine has to do mainly with the life and experience, and can be verified only in the life and experience. The truth of our Lord's practical and spiritual teaching is tested only by actually putting it to the test; that is, making experiment of it, acting upon it in the life. It is for the religious sphere, and the conclusions of reasoning cannot determine its falsehood or truth. When our Lord says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light;" how shall we verify this saying? The only method of testing it is by taking that easy yoke and bearing that light burden; or by collecting the testimony of those who have done

so. The larger number by far of the vital principles of the Gospel are open to the same process of verification, and to no other. "If any man will do the will of My Father, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." *British Quarterly Review*, 1879.

God does not leave Himself unrevealed to the man who seeks after Him in the appointed way. And it is only when we get where we know God as a fact and feel Him as a certainty that is beyond impeachment that anything that can properly be called religion really begins. All our philosophy is well enough as philosophy. All our dogma may be correct enough as dogma. Pictures of the sun may answer excellently well as pictures, but they give no light. Theories of God may be wrought out with consummate acuteness and delicacy, but they work in us no assurance and minister to us no comfort. God, not as a topic that we can ponder upon, but as a personal presence into which we can come, and find ourselves gifted and assured, is what you and I actually want, and what we cannot be satisfied without obtaining. God is visible to the heart that is clean. We can call it seeing God, or walking with God, or being hid with Christ in God. The phraseology matters nothing so long as the one deep fact is there. And then all our suspense ceases. Our life is filled with wonderful composure. We have touched solid rock. We can believe largely now because we know profoundly. The last ingredient of infidelity is cleansed from our faith. We can bear burdens that are heavy because we have certain footing. How *high* we shall build will depend; but one thing is settled—the foundation is fixed, and that will not have to be stirred any more. We know the Lord, and all that remains to us is to *go on* to know the Lord. C. H. P.

Religion is not a matter of theory, but a matter of life. We are to prove it by living it. Take every word which Christ speaks, and begin at once to obey it if it be a command, or trust it and lean on it if it be a promise. No matter if you do not understand it nor see why the command is good, yet do it. Let God lead you, and only be sure that you obey and trust Him. You will not know any faster than you will do. Only keep on following Christ, and the way will open to you and become plain as you go on step by step. J. R. M.

Christ thus puts practice before knowledge, or, rather, practice as a means to knowledge; and in this He lays down no arbitrary or unfamiliar law. The best of our knowledge—all of it, indeed, that is practically useful—is gained

through practice. No man ever learned the truth and will of God without doing His will. The doing is just as much a part of the learning as the studying. Doing is a mode of study. . . . To know God is the best solution of mysteries. To know that teaching is from God is to be satisfied that you will be taught all that you ought to know. Through this process you will have reached not only the teaching of God, but what is more important, the result of that teaching, the secret of life. For you will come to know God as revealed in His Son; "and this is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." You shall know that life as you know your own natural life—not its ultimate mystery, but as a conscious Divine force in you—Christ formed within; as an ever-burning and yearning love; as a steady impulse to duty; as a rest in toil; as a comfort in sorrow; as a controlling wisdom; as an intelligent sympathy; as a translator of the commonplace into the heavenly. *Vincent*.

Often look on the perfect pattern which Christ in His holy example hath given thee for a holy life. Our hand will be as the copy is we write after; if we set low examples before us, it cannot be expected we should rise high ourselves; and indeed the holiest saint on earth is too low to be our pattern, because perfection in holiness must be aimed at by the weakest Christian, and that is not to be found in the best of saints in this lower world. If thou wilt walk holily, thou must not only endeavor to do what Christ commands, but as Christ Himself did; thou must labor to shape every letter in thy copy, action in life, in a holy imitation of Christ. *Gurnall*.

No grace, not even the most sparkling and shining, can bring us to heaven without perseverance in following Christ; not faith, if it be faint and frail; nor love, if it decline and wax cold; nor humility, if it continue not to the end; not obedience, not repentance, not patience, no, nor any other grace, except they have their perfect work. It is not enough to begin well unless we end well. *T. Brooks*.

The followers of Christ were first His servants, and He their Master; then His disciples, and He their Teacher; soon afterward they were His friends, and He theirs; straightway after His resurrection and entrance into an immortal condition they were His brethren; and, lastly, they were incorporated into Him and made partakers of His glory. *Bp. Hall*.

4. Alas! that there should ever be occasion

to turn so abruptly from the glory of God's mercy to the meanness of man's sin; from the enduring love and the well-ordered going forth of His light and salvation to the fickleness of man's best resolutions and to the inconstancy of his most hopeful professions! The antithesis between this verse and the preceding one should be noted. The morning light, gloriously outbreathing from the east, is God's love shining out on the darkness of the sin-stricken soul. The morning cloud and the early dew, hopeful and sweet for a moment, but soon gone up as if they had never been, are the goodness of God's inconstant people. We cannot wonder that the Lord should exclaim, "O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee?" By what new and untried appliances shall I bring stability out of fickleness, and make your wavering steps steadfast? H. C.

God wants something more than passing emotions of sorrow for sin, something more than short lived spasms of desire for holiness. The religion God wants in men is that which binds them to Him with bands that cannot be severed; which does not weaken as time rolls by; which stays by them in fair weather and foul; when things go well and when they go ill. Let men take heed lest they be left as Ephraim, left to the world into whose arms they have cast themselves, left to the idols to which they have joined themselves. No man can dismiss the impressions which God's truth sends him but at the peril of his soul. *J. C. McClintock.*

5. *Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.* God having admonished, reproved and threatened the people in order to recall them, but without effect, they cannot accuse Him of cruelty in inflicting the judgments which He threatens—such judgments are evidently deserved; their justice is as clear as the sun, "as the light that goeth forth," as manifest as that is to all. *Poole.*

6. "Mercy" here represents the whole circle of moral duties toward man, as in the next clause "the knowledge of God" stands for that which is practical, not theoretical only, and comprises all right affections toward God. The people had shown themselves far more ready to offer sacrifices than to *do right* toward either God or man. The Lord, on the contrary, held sacrifices in low esteem, but held in the highest esteem mercy toward man and the intelligent worship and homage of the heart toward God. See a similar doctrine taught in the Old Testament (Ps. 40: 7-9; 50: 8-23; Isa. 1: 11-17; Micah 6: 6-8). Our Divine Teacher on two several occasions endorsed the sentiment

of this verse most emphatically (Matt. 9: 13; 12: 7): "Go ye and learn what that meaneth; I will have mercy and not sacrifice," said, in this case, to show why He ate with publicans and sinners—viz., to save their souls. "But if ye had known what this meaneth: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,' ye would not have condemned the guiltless"—said in rebuke of the Pharisees for their judgments in regard to keeping the Sabbath. This form of statement should not be pressed to mean that God had never required sacrifice and burnt offerings; this would not be true. This doctrine needs often to be revived and reiterated, so prone are men to put the forms and ceremonies of religion in the place of real kindness and justice toward man and honest heart worship of God. H. C.

I desired mercy and not sacrifice—that is, rather than sacrifice, and insisted upon the knowledge of God more than upon burnt offerings. Mercy here is the same word which we rendered goodness (verse 4), piety, sanctity; it is put for all practical religion; it is the same with charity in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbor; and this accompanied with and flowing from the knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself in His Word, a firm belief that He is and is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, a good affection to Divine things guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation—this is that which God by His covenant requires, and not sacrifice and offering. This is fully explained Jer. 7: 22, 23, "I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt offerings" (that was the smallest of the matters I spake to them of, and on which the least stress was laid), but "this I said, Obey My voice" (Micah 6: 6-8). To love God and our neighbor is better than all burnt offering and sacrifice (Mark 12: 33; Ps. 51: 16, 17). Not but that sacrifice and offering were required and to be paid and had their use, and when they were accompanied with mercy and the knowledge of God were acceptable to Him, but without these God regarded them not, He despised them. It is mentioned likewise to show that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices—"I will not reprove thee for them" (Ps. 50: 8), but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God among them (chap. 4: 1), and to teach us all that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful, and separate from that the

performances of devotion, though ever so plausible, ever so costly, are of no account. Our Saviour quotes this to show that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals whenever they come in competition, and to justify Himself in eating with publicans and sinners because it was in mercy to the souls of men, and in healing on the Sabbath day because it was in mercy to the bodies of men to which the ceremony of singularity in eating and the Sabbath rest must give way (Matt. 9:13; 12:7). II.

*Sacrifice* is one of the two broad requirements for Christian living. That great word implies surrender, and often painful surrender. We are, then, to be both priests and sacrifices. We are to lay ourselves, and especially our active life, our senses, appetites and activities on the altar. That is no mere metaphor, but means continual self-suppression—the bridling always, the slaying often of natural instincts. The word implies, further, surrender to God, the continual recognition of Him, and the yielding of ourselves, not to any cold abstraction like duty or necessity, but to that merciful God who has given us all, and who gives us back glorified the self that we offer to Him.

The other great word descriptive of Christian living is *transformation*. That requirement presupposes that change is needed before we can be right with God or moulded as He would have us to be. "This age," the present order of things, presses in on us on every side, and, unless we oppose strenuous, constant resistance, will mould us like clay into its own ugly likeness. Resistance, nonconformity, is necessary for all nobility of character. And the change must be continuous and progressive. It must be a daily work.<sup>1</sup> It is our work; for though we cannot change ourselves except very superficially, we can keep ourselves in contact with Him who can change us down to the roots of our being. A. M.

II. Also, O Judah, He has set a harvest for thee; thou must be reckoned with as well as Ephraim; and the time, even the set time, of thy destruction is hastening on when thou that hast ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness shalt reap the same. The general judgment is compared to a harvest (Matt. 13:39); so are particular judgments (Joel 3:13; Rev. 14:15). II.

## HOSEA, CHAPTERS VII., VIII., IX.

7:1 WHEN I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood: and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir *the fire*, from the kneading of the dough until it be leavened. On the day of our king the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners. For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whilst they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me. Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not. And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: 11 yet they have not returned unto the Lord their God, nor sought him, for all this. And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding; they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven: I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard. Woe unto them! for they have wandered from me; destruction unto them! for they have trespassed against me: though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, they rebel against me. Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. They return, but not to *him that*

is on high ; they are like a deceitful bow : their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue : this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

8 : 1 *Set the trumpet to thy mouth.* As an eagle *he cometh* against the house of the LORD : because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. They shall cry unto me, My God, we Israel know thee. Israel hath cast off that which is good : the enemy shall pursue him. They have set up kings, but not by me ; they have made princes, and I knew it not : of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria ; mine anger is kindled against them : how long will it be ere they attain to innocency ? For from Israel is even this ; the workman made it, and it is no God : yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind ; he hath no standing corn ; the blade shall yield no meal ; if so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up : now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. For they are gone up to Assyria, like a wild ass alone by himself : Ephraim hath hired lovers. Yea, though they hire among the nations, now will I gather them ; and they begin to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of princes. Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars to sin, altars have been unto him to sin. Though I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts, they are counted as a strange thing. As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it ; but the Lord accepteth them not : now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins : they shall return to Egypt. For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded palaces ; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities : but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the castles thereof.

9 : 1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, like the peoples ; for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved hire upon every cornfloor. The threshing-floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail her. They shall not dwell in the LORD's land ; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. They shall not pour out wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto him : their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners ; all that eat thereof shall be polluted : for their bread shall be for their appetite ; it shall not come into the house of the Lord. What will ye do in the day of solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of the Lord ? For, lo, they are gone away from destruction, yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them : their pleasant things of silver, nettles shall possess them : thorns shall be in their tents. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come ; Israel shall know it : the prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and because the enmity is great. Ephraim was a watchman with my God : as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah : he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness ; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first season : but they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves unto the shameful thing, and became abominable like that which they loved. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird : there shall be no birth, and none with child, and no conception. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there be not a man left : yea, woe also to them when I depart from them ! Ephraim, like as I have seen Tyre, is planted in a pleasant place : but Ephraim shall bring out his children to the slayer. Give them, O Lord : what wilt thou give ? give them a mis-carrying womb and dry breasts. All their wickedness is in Gilgal ; for there I hated them : because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house : I will love them no more ; all their princes are revolvers. Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit : yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay the beloved fruit of their womb. My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him : and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

**Chap. 7.** Speaking of Ephraim, this chapter continues to portray his treachery, blindness, intense passion in sinning, and extreme folly. It should be specially noted that throughout this and the succeeding chapters to the

twelfth, Ephraim, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, is the theme of remark, Judah being scarcely mentioned. The historic events alluded to fell within the last years of the kingdom—some of them in the reign of Hoshea, its last king.



1. Their case was bad, but it was not desperate; nay, it was hopeful when God would have healed Israel. He would have reformed them, would have parted between them and their sins, would have purged out the corruptions that were among them by His laws and prophets. He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and restored to them their peace and prosperity. Several healing attempts were made, and their declining state seemed sometimes to be in a hopeful way of recovery; but their own folly put them back again.

2. As good say that there is no God as say that He is either ignorant or forgetful; that there is none that judges in the earth as say that He remembers not the things He is to give judgment upon; it is a high affront they put upon God; it is a damning cheat they put upon themselves; they say, "The Lord shall not see." II.

7. *All their kings are fallen.* The prophecy looks forward to the fall of the last six kings in uninterrupted succession—Zecbariah, Shalum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea. *Bp. Horsley.*

8. Ephraim hath mixed himself with heathens and is a professed associate with them; Ephraim is grown irresolute in his religion. Like a cake that is half dough and half baked, so is he half Israelite, half pagan. *Bp. Hall.*

—One thing on one side, another on the other. Burned to a coal at bottom; raw dough at the top. An apt image of a character that is all inconsistencies. *Bp. Horsley.*—**A cake not turned.** All along the Black Sea, from the Mæotic Lake to the Caspian Sea, in Chaldaea and in Mesopotamia, except in towns, the people often make their bread about an inch thick; this they lay on a corner of the hearth and cover it with hot embers and ashes; in a quarter of an hour they turn it. *Pocock.*

As in Ahab's time, so now, they halted between God and Baal; sometimes they seemed zealous for God, but at other times as hot for Baal. It is sad to think how many who after a sort profess religion are made up of contraries and inconsistencies, as a cake not turned; a constant self-contradiction, and always in one extreme or the other. II.

The man who lives for *pleasure* alone is a cake not turned. One side of his nature is unduly baked; the other is entirely neglected. Pleasure has its uses, but pleasure as a business is a very poor business indeed. Honey is good, but the man who undertakes to eat nothing else will have neither brawn nor brain. In all walks of life there are many representatives of

this class. The man who lives for *business* alone is a cake not turned. This man stands higher, all will admit, than the mere votary of pleasure. Business is good, business has its claims; these claims must be recognized. But even though the business be honorable and the methods of its pursuit unobjectionable, the man who lives for this life alone loses this life as well as the life which is to come. The world has claims upon men of wealth. Great possessions involve corresponding responsibility, and the intellect that is used in acquiring ought also to be used in wisely distributing. God will not hold him guiltless who amasses great wealth for personal gratification or family aggrandizement. The wants of ten thousand needy enterprises demand recognition. A man who lives for *culture* alone—as that word is usually understood—is a cake not turned. Culture will adorn piety; but piety crowns and glorifies culture. We want both. Both are one. That is not true culture which fails to cultivate the nobler, the diviner elements of the soul. The man who neglects this is a crude Ephraim—a cake not turned. A man who is *half hearted* in religion is a cake not turned. A half-and-half man is a failure always and everywhere. No compromise! This should be the Christian's watchword. That was a magnificent army of David's—"fifty thousand who could keep rank; they were not of double heart." The literal rendering is, "who were not of a heart and a heart." They had but one purpose—the honor of their king and the glory of their God. They did not have one heart for the field and another for the home. *MacArthur.*

9. Though the young will hardly credit it, men with furrows in their brow and gray hairs on their head often find it difficult to remember that they are old; to believe it; to realize the approach of their end; how near they are to the grave. Death seems to flee before us, like the horizon which we ever see and never reach. *Guthrie.*

11. Assyria was to Israel what Babylon was to Judah—the appointed destroyer. But the greater part of the prophets living later than Israel's captivity, and being chiefly concerned with the condition and destiny of the kingdom of Judah, and Assyria being already overthrown, and the Babylonian empire established, it is only in two or three of the minor prophets, and in the earlier prophecies of Isaiah, that we look for direct information respecting the Assyrians. The three prophets, Hosea, Amos and Jonah, lived when the Assyrian empire was in its most flourishing estate; when that power

was well known in Syria and Palestine, and when the kingdom of Israel felt deeply the weight of its imperial arm. *Kitto*.

**13.** The passage puts in forcible contrast the loving faithfulness of God, still warm and sure, on the one hand; and, on the other, the treachery and utter infidelity of His people. The original makes this contrast the more palpable by writing out in full the pronouns "I" and "they." These pronouns are not usually written in Hebrew except for the sake of emphasis. H. C.

**14.** "They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." It was a selfish, cowardly, resentful howling, and not the sigh of penitence or the storm of contrition. Men come to us with sad stories of distress, and they make long moans about pain and fear, about poverty and uselessness. They use the words which penitents might use, but not in a contrite spirit. Analyze their howling, and it is all selfish. It is the flesh that complains; it is not the spirit that repents. J. P.

**16.** If they turned, in any sense, it was not to the Most High. The original most naturally reads, "They will turn to a *no-god*"—to one *not* the Most High, but the opposite—one infinitely low and mean. Hosea, the last king of the Ten Tribes, sought help from Egypt against the king of Assyria, but only to his shame and ruin (2 K. 17: 4). So shall it ever be with all who depart from God!

**Chap. 8.** Israel is still the subject of rebuke and of threatened judgment—the prophet bringing forth to view her sins, her resort to idol gods and to foreign alliances, to the rejection of her own ever-living God, and showing that this policy must be utterly ruinous.

**1.** This verse is remarkably in the peculiar style of Hosea—abrupt and bold. "To thy mouth the trumpet" [the foe comes down]; "as an eagle upon the house of the Lord, because they [My people] have broken My covenant and sinned against My law."

The blast of the trumpet, long and loud, was the alarm for war. The coming of the foe is compared with the swoop of the eagle, when, from his lofty height, he comes down upon the temple.

**2.** Grievously as they had departed from God, they still made high religious professions, vainly claiming to know the true God. So in later times they said, "We have Abraham to our father." "Have we not prophesied in Thy name?"

**5.** "Thy calf, Samaria," is the golden one

set up by Jeroboam (see 1 K. 12: 26-33), out of which grew the idol worship of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. Samaria, the capital, here represents the whole kingdom; the calf was properly theirs. H. C.

The prophetic writings are of great value as regards the independent testimony they bear to the national history. This testimony is never at variance with, and it frequently illustrates, what we learn by the ordinary historical records. The calves of Bethel and Dan are assured to us as facts by the prophets of Israel, Hosea and Amos. *Leathes*.

**6.** The aggravation of this case was that the calf "came out *from Israel*"—from God's chosen people. "A workman made it" with his human fingers, so that it is *no god* at all. On the contrary, according to the expressive Hebrew, "it shall become fragments." The prophets were wont to expose the ineffable folly of idol-worship and of all trust in idols, by referring to their origin as nothing higher or other than human workmanship. A mere man made it, made all there is of it; and can that senseless, helpless thing be *God*? H. C.

**7.** *Sown the wind . . . reap the whirlwind.* The Divine law of requital (cf. Gal. 6: 7). Israel's works, their idolatries, heathen alliances, and the like, were in themselves fruitless of good; but the disappointment attending upon them would be more than the loss of good desired; it would take the form of a hurricane of overwhelming destruction which would sweep them away themselves. B. C.

In the sorrow of the world the obliquity of the heart toward evil is not cured; it seems as if nothing cured it; heartache and trials come in vain; the history of life at last is what it was at first. The man is found erring where he erred before. The same course, began with the certainty of the same desperate end which has taken place so often before. They have reaped the whirlwind, but they will again sow the wind. F. W. R.

Multitudes, having passions given them for restraint from evil and for application to good, and for activity in the pursuit of pure happiness, and having seed sown, suggestions poured in, and influences lavished from God, for discipline and growth, for nurture and wise training toward a period of useful and blissful development, live upon their passions, exasperate and then exhaust them. They take their sowing time for spending-time; they eat their corn green; they consume for self and forbidden gratification the seed that God has given for

lasting happiness; they consume for hell the seed that God has given for heaven. But they who do this, while they seem to be spending, are really sowing. The seed in the waste of which they destroy the possibility of any good harvest springs up for evil. They are sowing sin and misery; sowing the wind, to reap the whirlwind. Their happiness must certainly be wrecked here, and wrecked hereafter. Every mad indulgence of passion, and every wicked neglect of the sowing of good seed, is the putting deep into the soul the seeds of a future tempest of remorse and havoc. G. B. C.

**12.** For the hypothetical rendering preferred by the English revisers, "Though I write My law in ten thousand precepts, they are counted as a strange thing," the American Company substitutes the more affirmative, "I wrote for him the ten thousand things of My law, but they are counted," etc., which is in the English margin. *Chambers*.

The prophet, to mark Israel's inexcusable-ness, refers to the multiplied communications of His will which God had made to His people (Jer. 7: 25), and that too in *writing*; having in view, perhaps, not only "the book of the law" (Deut. 28: 61; Josh. 1: 8), but also instructions given through prophets, and by them, even before Hosea's time, committed to writing. B. C.

God had sent to him in writing the great things of His law—its great truths, principles, and rules of life; yet he had practically accounted them as foreign and unworthy of his thought or care. This is the monster sin of all those in Christian lands who repel the light of God's Word, and sin on as if no Bible had ever been given them. Jesus said (John 15: 22), "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak [excuse] for their sin." II. C. —How many have we, men of great estates, and claiming to be of great minds, that scarce regard the law of God; they look upon His law as beneath them. Books of history and war they will peruse with diligence; but for the Scripture, it is a thing that has little in it. It is a special means to obedience to have high thoughts of God's law. That is the reason why the prophet speaks thus, "I have written to him the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing." As if he should say, if they had had the things of My law in their thoughts, they would never so have acted. *J. Burroughs*.

Once it was, *do and live*; now it is, *believe and live*. And yet the law has not been de-

stroyed. It has not been changed. Until heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law. What, then, is our relation to it? What end does it serve for us, seeing that we cannot be saved by keeping it? It exists for us as *the rule of our life*. We must have some rule, and this is the one by which, as Christians, we must walk. We are saved by grace through faith. But the only satisfactory evidence of our being in a state of grace is conformity of life to the law of God. "If ye love Me," says Christ; "keep My commandments." And again He says, "If a man love Me, he *will* keep My words." This obedience to the Divine rule is one of the infallible evidences of true discipleship. *D. Winters*.

**My law.** Goguet, in his elaborate and learned treatise on the "Origin of Laws," observes, that "the more we meditate on the laws of Moses, the more we shall perceive their wisdom and inspiration. They alone have the inestimable advantage never to have undergone any of the revolutions common to all human laws. There has been nothing changed, nothing added, nothing retrenched from the laws of Moses for above three thousand years." *Milman*.—The Hebrews struck so deep, and they struck so utterly the great moral laws of God in their relation to human life, and in their associated action, that in its development the world has more and more built itself upon that which was disclosed by them. II. P. L.

**Chap. 9.** Ephraim is still the subject; the strain of rebuke for sin is more and more mingled with announcements of near impending judgment.

**5.** A rendering more true to the original, and giving better the exact sense, would be, "What will ye do for the day of solemn assembly, and for the day of the feast of the Lord?" They could no more have them in the remote land of their captivity. They would sadly miss those seasons of great public rejoicing. II. C.

**6.** The general sense of this passage is very clear. It describes the extreme devastation of the country by the Assyrian conquest, under the image of weeds growing up in the dwellings, deserted by their owners, and stripped of their costly and elegant furniture of silver. *Lp. Horsley*.

**7.** *The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad.* The days are at hand which shall make the Israelites sensible, that not a word of God shall want its effect, and that His prophets

were true prophets, but their false prophets, to whom the Israelites hearkened, were indeed "fools" and "madmen." And this should come to pass "for the multitude of their iniquity," whereby they showed themselves to "hate" God, and made themselves hateful to Him. *Poole*.—Because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and bid defiance to it, therefore God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie, so strong that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompense comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them, and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them. They shall know then whether the true prophets, that were really spiritual men guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, fools and madmen; and they shall be convinced that they were the wise men of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. II.

7. This and the two following verses form one paragraph: "the visitation for . . . iniquity" of this verse reappearing in verse 9, "He will remember their iniquity and visit their sins," while again verse 7 is linked to verse 8 by the repetition of the word "hatred," the Hebrew noun for which occurs nowhere else in the Bible. The general purport of the whole is to express the deep resentment which the inspired prophet felt at the scorn and malignity with which God's messengers were received by the people, and his satisfaction at the vindication which their mission would receive when the Divine judgments which they had denounced should come to pass. B. C.

8. Despite of his great sin, Ephraim was full of hope and expectation of good from Jehovah—probably with reference to help against their foreign enemies—which help might have come had not the false prophet been as a snare of a fowler over his ways. Repeatedly is this grievous apostasy of the people ascribed largely to the terribly pernicious influence of corrupt priests and false prophets. Truly there can be no power for evil so active and so fatal as a corrupt ministry—as flagrant sin in those who speak for God and of Him to men.

9. The sin of Gibeon: at the time referred to may be seen (*Judges* 19 : 22-25). An appalling history! Alas for the dreadful corruption of the land of Ephraim, if it was fitly compared to those scenes in Gibeon of Benjamin! Good reason why God should remember their iniquity and visit retribution upon the whole land!

10. The true light for seeing their sins can be had only through contrast with the bright days of their early national history. Hence this historical sketch. As one finds grapes in the wilderness, himself weary and hungry, and not expecting luscious fruit amid such barrenness, and therefore is filled with joy at the discovery, so the Lord found Israel. The first ripe figs in their first bearing year furnish the next beautiful figure. But the fatal mischief was, they went after idol gods, and plunged into the vices associated with idol worship. First at Baal-peor, in the wilderness (see *Num.* 25). The last clause thus, "They became abominable, like their paramours, lovers;" referring to the idol gods to whom they gave their homage. So evermore men become like the God they worship; abominable and vile like their idols, or pure-minded and loving, like Him whose nature is purity and whose name is love. H. C.

11-17. In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers: here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it.

12. He departs from them. When they revolt from Him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that He should depart from them, and withdraw both His protection and His bounty? And well may His threatening be enforced as it is, and made terrible. Woe also unto them when I depart from them! Those are in a woeful condition indeed whom God has forsaken. Our weal or woe depends upon the gracious presence of God with us; and if He goes, all weal goes with Him, and all woes come upon us. H.

"Let him alone," is the sentence which has gone forth, and the man is lost. Thenceforward his career is one of growing sinfulness. Thenceforward his state is one of spiritual sleep, profound as that of the grave, undisturbed by any Sabbath argument, unbroken by any threatening omen, unaffected by the approaching realities of another world; and though he may live amid scenes of spiritual beauty, and though the refreshing showers of heavenly grace may brighten and give new verdure to the moral landscape around him—there he is—a spot blasted by heaven's fire, which can never be cultivated, a tree scathed by heaven's lightning, ready to be cut down as fuel for the burning. But oh! how lame and feeble are words to give expression to the sentiment which God has ut-

tered, "Woe unto them when I depart from them." E. M.

**16.** *Yet will I slay.* The scope of these words is to set forth the diminution of Israel, as to their glory, number, strength, and power, by a firm decree from God. This is according to the curse, anciently denounced against them in the law, that, if they should become disobedient they should "be left few in num-

ber" (Lev. 26 : 22 ; Deut. 4 : 27 . 28 : 62). *Pococke.*

**17.** *They shall be wanderers among the nations.* And so they became, and so they continue to this day, "wandering among the nations," so as scarce to be found out, having no settled place of their own, nowhere that they can be called a people, or are as such acknowledged. *Pococke.*

## HOSEA CHAPTERS X., XI., XII.

**10 : 1** ISRAEL is a luxuriant vine, which putteth forth his fruit : according to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars ; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly pillars. Their heart is divided ; now shall they be found guilty : he shall smite their altars, he shall spoil their pillars. Surely now shall they say, We have no king ; for we fear not the Lord ; and the king, what can he do for us ? They speak vain words, swearing falsely in making covenants : therefore judgement springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the calves of Beth-aven : for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced over it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It also shall be carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareh : Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria, her king is cut off, as fawn upon the water. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed : the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars ; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us ; and to the hills, Fall on us. O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah : there they stood ; that the battle against the children of iniquity should not overtake them in Gibeah. When it is my desire, I will chastise them ; and the peoples shall be gathered against them, when they are bound to their two transgressions. And Ephraim is an heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out the corn ; but I have passed over upon her fair neck : I will set a rider on Ephraim ; Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods. Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to mercy ; break up your fallow ground : for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity ; ye have eaten the fruit of lies ; for thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle : the mother was dashed in pieces with her children. So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness : at daybreak shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

**11 : 1** When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them : they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to go ; I took them on my arms ; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love ; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat before them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt ; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. And the sword shall fall upon his cities, and shall consume his bars, and devour them, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from me : though they call them to him that is on high, none at all will exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah ? how shall I set thee as Zeboim ? mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim : for I am God, and not man ; the Holy One in the midst of thee : and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the Lord, who shall roar like a lion : for he shall

- 11 roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west. They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith the LORD.
- 12 Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit: but **12:1** Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the Holy One. Ephraim feedeth on the wind, and followeth after the east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with us; even the LORD, the God of hosts: the LORD is his memorial. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgement, and wait on thy God continually.
- 7, 8 *He is a trafficker, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.* And Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labours they shall find in me none iniquity that were sin. But I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt; I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast.
- 10 I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes. Is Gilead iniquity? they are altogether vanity; in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks: yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field.
- 12 And Jacob fled into the field of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep. And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. Ephraim hath provoked to anger most bitterly: therefore shall his blood be left upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

**Chap. 10.** The same general subject continues; the sin of Ephraim and its just punishment (verses 1-11); a call to repentance and a new life (verse 12); judgments still more near and dire (verses 13-15).

1. The very point made is the abundant wealth of Israel, perverted the more to idolatry and sin. The more God gives them, the more they give to idols; the richer their land and its products, the richer shrines and altars go up for Baal. So sinful men everywhere are wont to pervert the earthly gifts of God, till more gifts only make them more wicked and more ungrateful to the Giver; and so more mercy in this line becomes only their greater curse. H. C.

4. Sin is bound by an iron link to penalty. "Therefore," says Hosea, God's judgment springs up, like a bitter plant (the precise name of which is unknown) in the furrows, where the farmer did not know that its seeds lay. They little dreamed what they were sowing when they scattered abroad their lives, but this is the fruit of that. "Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" and whatever other crop we may hope to gather from our sins, we shall gather that bitter one, which we did not expect. The inevitable connection of sin and judgment, the bitterness of its results, the unexpectedness of them, are all here, and to be laid to heart by us. A. M.

5. Beth aven, house of idols (literally, of

nothings, nonentities), is instead of Bethel, house of God—the name being changed to indicate the fearful fact that the people had ceased to be a house of God, and had become a house of idols, after Jeroboam of Nebat set up his golden calf there. The sentiment of this verse is, that the people of Samaria should be put in fear because of these calves. So far from finding peace and help from their new gods, they should find only peril and alarm.

8. "The sin of Israel" is said of the calf at Bethel, as being the occasion and manifestation of her sin of idolatry. The growth of thorns and thistles in places once so much frequented and so magnificent in works of art, gives a vivid sense of utter desolation. The doom of the people would be so terrible that they would choose death rather than life, and hence would cry to the mountains, "Cover us," and to the hills, "Fall on us!" H. C.

Our Lord refers (Luke 23:30), as does John in the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:16; 9:6) to Hosea's powerful metaphor of terror, "they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us." *Farrar*.

9. **There they stood.** A remnant, even six hundred men, survived, from whom the tribe was again filled up. The battle in Gibeah (Judges 21) against the children of iniquity (those wicked men) did not overtake and exterminate them. Ephraim need not expect to come off so well, for of her no remnant shall

survive to replace the fallen and rebuild the kingdom.

**10.** "It is in My purpose to chastise them, and the nations shall be gathered against them when they shall be bound for their two sins"—these sins having reference to the two golden calves at Bethel and at Dan. In the same sense the "high places of Aven" are called "the sin of Israel" (verse 8). The idea is that, to chastise them, God will bind them fast because of these sins of calf-worship, and will then gather the nations (Syrians and Assyrians) together to fall upon them. So construed, the sense is vigorous, and entirely in accordance with both the significance of the several words and the grammatical construction. H. C.

**11.** Like Ephraim, we like to tread out the corn, and to hear those pleasant songs and music that Gospel sermons make, where only grace is preached and nothing of our duty as to works of self-denial. But as for such, God will tread upon their fair neck, and yoke them with Christ's yoke; for then they have a work to do, even a work of self-denial. *Bryan.*

**12.** The prophet turns here to exhort both Israel and Judah to repentance and to works of righteousness. Here, as is very common in Hebrew, the second of two successive imperatives should be rendered in the future as a promise. "Sow for yourselves, for righteousness; thus shall ye reap according to your piety." The "reaping in mercy" must be *promise, not command*. "For righteousness" is the literal rendering, meaning, sow what will naturally produce the fruits of righteousness. The word rendered "mercy" must refer to man, not to God, and is therefore piety. The Hebrew phrase means—according to the measure of your piety. "Break up your fallow ground;" make all due preparation for the harvest of blessings you need and should seek. H. C.

*Reap in mercy.* This is a promise, that if they did "sow in righteousness," they should "reap in mercy"—that is, they should experience that measure of mercy whereby God, above their desert, rewards those who sincerely endeavor to do His commandments. *Dr. Poole.*—The whole verse may be thus paraphrased: Give yourselves to all holy and conscientious endeavors; sow to yourselves in holiness and righteousness, and reap mercy and lovingkindness from the Lord; break up the fallow grounds of your hearts by a true and serious repentance; for it is time for you to turn to the Lord, and to seek to recover His favor; so far as that He may rain upon you the

showers of His grace and mercy, whereby ye may appear righteous in His sight. *Ips. Holl.*

Let them break up the fallow ground; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as weeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the Divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed that it may take root. (See Jer. 4:3). Let them sow to themselves in righteousness; let them return to the practice of good works, according to the law of God which is the rule of righteousness; let them abound in works of piety toward God, and of justice and charity toward one another, and herein let them sow to the Spirit, as the apostle speaks (Gal. 6:7, 8). Every action is seed sown. Let them sow in righteousness; let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do, and they themselves shall have the benefit of it. Let them seek the Lord; let them look up to Him for His grace, and beg of Him to bless the seed sown. The husbandman must plough and sow with an eye to God, asking of Him rain in the season thereof. H.

Do not fancy that Christian righteousness is different from ordinary "goodness," except as being broader and deeper, more thoroughgoing, more imperative. Divergencies there are, for our law is more than a republication of the law written on men's hearts. Though the one agrees with the other, yet the area which they cover is not the same. The precepts of the one, like some rock-hewn inscriptions by forgotten kings, are weathered and indistinct, often illegible, often misread, often neglected. The other is written in living characters in a perfect life. It includes all that the former attempts to enjoin, and much more besides. It breathes a deeper meaning and a tenderer beauty into the words which express human conceptions of virtue, but it does take up these into itself. A. M.

The depravity of the world is just its forgetfulness, impatience, contempt of its God; the godless *excellences*, the unsanctified noblenesses of man, are the truest, the most awful proofs of the fact. That the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, should disclaim subjection to his God is sad, but scarcely surprising; the depth, the universality of the rebellion is seen in the independence of our very virtues upon God; in the vast sphere of human excellence into which God never once enters; in the amiability that loves all but God; in the self-devotion that never surrendered one gratification for the

sake of God ; in the indomitable energy that never wrought one persevering work for God ; in the enduring patience that faints under no weight of toil except the labor of adoring and praising God. This it is which really demonstrates the alienation of the world from its Maker, that its *best* affections should thus be affections to all but Him ; that He should have to behold the fairest things He has formed—kindness and gratitude and love—embracing every object but Himself ; the loveliest feelings He has implanted taking root, and growing and blossoming through the world, to bear fruit for all but Him ! W. A. B.

"Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you." This command comes down in the midst of a perfect shower of rural images ; and it connects, in a remarkable manner, the ploughing, and all the kind of work upon the heart and mind, indicated in that part of husbandry, with the work of seeking God, the work of effectually praying. It is *time* to seek the Lord ; but it is *useless* to seek Him, indeed there is no true seeking of Him, unless therewith you go to work upon your own soil, your own heart, and break up the fallow ground. It is time to sow ; but it is useless to sow, unless first you dig and plough, and break up the hard soil and the thorns with it. The work of praying itself is a kind of sowing ; it is a sowing with God's promises ; and to this work especially the prophet refers, announcing directly, in answer to the question, How shall we gain God's blessing ? a work to be done on our part, along *with* prayer, if we would render prayer effectual. The intimate and essential connection between praying and working is nowhere in the Word of God more strikingly exhibited. G. B. C.

There is no growth in holiness possible without the constant accompanying process of excision and crucifixion of the old. If you want to grow purer and liker Christ, you must slay yourselves. You cannot gird on "righteousness" above the old self, as some beggar might buckle to himself royal velvet with its ermine over his filthy tatters. There must be a putting off in order to and accompanying the putting on. Strip yourselves of yourselves, and then you "shall not be found naked," but clothed with the garments of salvation, as the bride with the robe which is the token of the bridegroom's love and the pledge of her espousals to him. A. M.

There are two centres in the universe, toward which man can strive and tend as an object of

being. They are God and self. A man must choose between them. It is his own self that chooses ; but in the one case his own self chooses for self, and against God ; and in the other case his own self chooses for God, and against self. The choice of self as an object of the striving of one's own self is always wrong. The choice of God as an object of the striving of one's own self is always right. Hell is the inevitable destiny of one who lives for self ; heaven is the sure destiny of one who lives for God. But hell and heaven are a result of the choice of self, or of God, as an object of life ; they are not in themselves the object of choice and of life. He whose whole self strives toward God, forgets self as a factor in life. He whose whole self strives toward self, forgets God as an object of desire and of life. He who would save his self shall lose his self, and he who loses sight of self through looking toward God shall be saved. S. S. T.

The words "selfish" and "selfishness" are of comparatively recent introduction into the English language. They are little more than two hundred years old, and were quite unknown to Shakespeare and the writers of his time. They first make their appearance in the writings of some of the Puritan divines toward the middle of the seventeenth century, and were remarked on, sometimes condemned as novelties, at the time of their first employment. It is a singular fact that the words should be so new, seeing that the thing is so old. Selfishness, or the undue love of self, is as old as sin, as old as the fall, or indeed as old as the devil. I called it just now the undue love of self. Perhaps I should have called it rather, the love of our wrong self. There is a self belonging to us, and that our true self, which it is our duty to love, as is plain from that precept of Christ, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—seeing that in this precept the love of self is made the rule, measure, and law of our love to our brethren ; which it could not be if it were itself a condemnable thing. *Abp. Trench.*

Legitimate self-love is the act or habit of a man who *so* loves himself that he gives himself to God. Selfishness is *fallen* self-love. It is self-love in excess, blind to the existence and excellence of God, and seeking its happiness in inferior objects, by aiming to subdue them to its own purposes. Every sin is but a modification of it. Avarice is but selfishness grasping and hoarding. Prodigality is but selfishness decorating and indulging itself—a man sacrificing to himself as his own god. Sen-



suality, and indeed all the sins of the flesh, are only selfishness setting itself above law, and gratifying itself at the expense of all restraint. And all the sins of the spirit are only the same principle impatient of contradiction, and refusing to acknowledge superiority, or to bend to any will but its own. What is egotism but selfishness *speaking*? Or crime, but selfishness, without its mask, in earnest and *acting*? *J. Harris.*

If you suppose the soul loving its duty, loving holiness, loving God in whom alone all these are contained; if you make what was its law to become its love, will you not have made its law become its happiness, will you not have ended the war between the two elements of its nature? will you not have reconciled the love of self with the love of goodness, and happiness with holiness? And does not this mere supposition make you comprehend that between the love of ourselves, taken in general, and the internal law of duty, there is no essential contradiction, and that there is no necessity of destroying, or even of restricting one of the two elements in order to make way for the other, seeing they are fitted and destined to form in our soul one single and common sentiment? While we say this of the love of ourselves, we do not say it of that other affection which, derived from self-love, is only the abuse and corruption of it; we mean *selfishness*. The distinguishing characteristic of this affection is to seek its satisfaction in the isolation of the individual. And in fact the love of ourselves, in its purity, does not hinder us from uniting with the rest of the sensible creation, whereas selfishness separates us. The former expands, the latter contracts; the former has its limits in all the beings of the world, the latter in ourselves alone; the former allows us to multiply our existence by sympathy, the latter reduces us to an individual life, which thus reduced is a death; the former is a harmony, the latter a discord in the universal concert; the former is truth, the latter falsehood; in one word, the latter is an abortion of the former. Such is selfishness, to which everything is an instrument, and nothing an end but itself. *Vinet.*

The man who lives absorbed in the miserable care for his own well-being is dead to all which makes life noble, sweet and real. Flagrant vice is not needed to kill the real life. Clean, respectable selfishness does the work effectually. But while all selfishness is fatal, it is self surrender and sacrifice "for My sake and the Gospel's," which is life-giving. Heroism,

generous self-devotion without love to Christ, is noble, but falls short of discipleship, and may even aggravate the sin of the man who exhibits it, because it shows what treasures he could lay at Christ's feet, if he would. It is only self-denial made sweet by reference to Him that leads to life. A. M.

So we have our choice. We may live for self, take good care of our lives, not exposing them to danger, not making personal sacrifices, having a keen eye always for our own interests and advancement. Then we may reach old age hale and well preserved. People may congratulate us on our well-preserved state, and we may have considerable pride in the result of our prudence and carefulness. But there is no harvest. The life has been no blessing to the world. That is, indeed, the whole outcome of selfishness. The other way to live is altogether to forget self—not to think of or care for one's own life, but to throw it away in obedience to God and in devotion to His service. The truth is we cannot be great blessings in this world, and at the same time take a selfish care of our own lives. That which costs us nothing is worth nothing. This principle lies a great deal deeper in the heart of all life than we are apt to think. All along the ages, whatever is good and beautiful and worthy has been the fruit of suffering and pain. Civilization has advanced through wars, revolutions and failures, through the ruin and overturning of empires and kingdoms. Every thoughtful reader of the world's history understands this. What Christian civilization is to-day, it is as the harvest of centuries of weary struggle and toil and human failure. Every advance worth recording has been made through carnage and disaster. It seems that without shedding of blood there is not only no remission of sins, but no growth, no progress in life. J. R. M.

13. Resuming the figures of husbandry, the prophet says, "Ye have ploughed wickedness," etc., in the same sense as Paul (Gal. 6: 7), "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" or Solomon (Prov. 1: 31), "They shall eat of the fruit of their own way." Ephraim had trusted, not in the Lord, but in the way of her own choice, and in the multitude of her mighty men. The Lord is now about to show her the folly of such trust. II. C.

13, 14. Once more we have sin and punishment exhibited in their organic connection in verses 13 and 14. Their past had been just the opposite of sowing righteousness and reaping mercy. Wickedness ploughed in, iniquity will

surely be its fruit. Sin begets sin, and is its own punishment. What fruit have we of doing wrong? "Lies"—that is, unfulfilled expectations of unrealized satisfaction. No man gets the good that he aimed at in sinning, or he gets something more that spoils it. At last the deceitfulness of sin will be found out, but we may be sure of it now. The root of all Israel's sin was the root of ours—namely, trust in self, and consequent neglect of God. The first half of verse 13 is an exhaustive analysis of the experience of every sinful life; the second, a penetrating disclosure of the foundation of it. A. M.

**Chap. II.** The strain of rebuke and of forewarning of judgment having continued with only brief interruptions from the beginning of chap. 4, till we are brought almost to the very day in which the king of Israel should be cut off, the course of thought now turns to reminiscences of love, and to the most touching expressions of pity and grief over the impending ruin of Israel.

**1.** Thinking of the nation as having a life time, analogous to that of the individual, running through infancy and youth to manhood, the Lord says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt." He had manifested a very special interest in the fathers of the nation, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; He had shown His care for their children during their oppressions under the Pharaohs. It was precisely by means of the *call* of God that Moses was trained, commissioned, and led on to become, under God, the deliverer of the people from Egyptian bondage. H. C.

Matthew (chap. 2: 15) cites the passage in reference to the fact that the Infant Jesus was taken down into Egypt and continued there till the death of Herod; his object being to obviate the prejudice which might arise in the mind of a high-caste Jew, from the circumstance of the early infancy of Jesus being passed in a polluted, heathen land. As Jehovah's interposition in bringing Israel out of Egypt proved that the misery and pollution of their Egyptian sojourn was no bar to His love to them, so also the distress and pollution attendant upon the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt constituted no just ground of objection to Jesus being the Messiah; Jesus came forth out of Egypt the Son of God nevertheless. B. C.—Matthew apparently quotes these words, not to prove anything, but in order to point out the relation of God's former dealings with the latter, the beginning and the

close, what relates to the body and what relates to the Head. *Pusey.*

"I called My son out of Egypt," as uttered by the prophet, was unquestionably meant to refer historically to the fact of the Lord's goodness in delivering Israel from that land of bondage and oppression. But the evangelist Matthew expressly points to it as a prophecy, and tells us that the Infant Jesus was for a time sent into Egypt, and again brought out of it, that the word might be fulfilled. This arose from the typical connection between Christ and Israel. The Scripture fulfilled was prophetic, simply because the circumstance it recorded was typical. But in so considering it, the evangelist puts no peculiar strain upon its terms, nor introduces any sort of double sense into its import. He merely points to the prophetic element involved in the transaction it relates, and thereby discovers to us a bond of connection between the Old and the New in God's dispensations, necessary to be kept in view for a correct apprehension of both. *P. Fairbairn.*

Each chosen one—each saint, each son, each child of God—is indeed called out of the Egypt of this world. The *call*, when looked at in the light of the past, is a *call* out of Egypt, a *call* into the wilderness, and a *call* for us to arise and set out on our journey home. *H. Bourne.*

**2.** God's calling of His son Israel, especially by the agency of Moses, suggested His continued agencies of calling the people by later prophets, and of this He proceeds to speak: "As they"—these later prophets—"called them, so they went away from their presence."

**3.** The description of God's tender care and gentle loving ways with His people continues. "I drew" (not drove) "them—with cords of a man," not cords of a bullock, untamed, headstrong and wild. These cords are explained fully in the words "with bands of love," by the sweet attractions which manifested love naturally creates. The next figure also is taken from the ways of the kind husbandman: "I was to them as they that lift up the yoke which presses on their cheek;" for the rule yokes of Oriental countries are heavy and ill-adapted to the comfort of animals while eating. The description continues: "I brought food to them and caused them to eat." The Hebrew has two verbs here, of which the literal sense is given in this translation. The tense of these verbs implies that God is willing still to feed them, as of old. This showing of God's loving care and gentleness toward His people is at

once beautiful and strong. The facts of the case justify more even than this. II. C.

*I drew them with cords of a man.* That is, such cords as are proper to draw men with, as they are men endued with reason to discern between good and evil and with freedom of will to choose the one before the other; and with such a temper and agreement of both that what we apprehend to be good we freely choose, and refuse what we think to be evil. Accordingly God sets before us good and evil, and both in such a light that we may clearly discern the difference between them, and choose the good before the evil. Thus He draws us with cords, suitable to man's constitution; in explanation He adds, "with hands of love," or with expressions of His love and kindness toward us. In this way one man commonly draws another; how much more can Almighty God do it, who hath the hearts of all men in His hand, and the greatest favors to bestow which man can possibly desire? This is the meaning of the apostle, "that the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). It doth not force or drag us, but it leads us to repentance, and so to Christ. *Bp. Beveridge.*

View it in one light, the admission of Christ into a sinner's heart is as much God's work as though man did nothing in it; view it in another, it is as much man's as though God did nothing. Man works, but he works by a power and by a will also that God has given him. "I drew them," says the Lord of His people of old, and with cords and hands—there is His almighty power; there He puts His own stamp on His own work—but how did He draw them? He tells us, "with cords of a man, with hands of love;" not as brute beasts that must be driven and forced, but as men, as reasonable beings, by convincing their judgments and laying hold of their hearts. *C. Bradley.*

There is a manifest congruity in the circumstance that the Agent conducts His work so silently and imperceptibly. It is only by such a mode of procedure that the spirit of man can retain its separate action and freedom. There is no violence done to man's nature in the supernatural work carried on in the heart. The dealings of God are, in every respect, suited to the essential and indispensable principles of man's nature. "I drew them with the cords of a man, with the hands of love." *McCosh.*

Love was the cord which bound the God-man to the holy cross; the nails and the cross could not have held Him had not love bound Him fast. It is the same blessed cord of love which

united Divinity to humanity; and for what cause? Love was the sole cause. It was love which at the first created us in the Divine image; and when we had lost the life of grace, love willing to give us back that which we had lost by sin and frailty. God sent forth His only Son, and willed that by His blood grace should be restored to us. And the Son, in all things obedient, humbled Himself to the death of the cross for love of us and for our salvation. . . . Oh, inestimable love! If man can give no greater proof of love than to lay down his life for a friend, how should we appreciate Thy love toward us who were Thy enemies? Thou hast given Thy life. Thou hast ransomed us with Thy blood. This surpasses all love. . . . Thou hast become the Mediator. Thy death has made peace between man and God; and the nails which pierced Thee are to us as the keys of life eternal! *St. Catherine of Siena.*

How many, alas! are drawn who will not come—by the voice of God in mercies, afflictions, invitations and warnings, to which they give no heed. But never did a sinner heed that voice and come to Christ in vain; never was a trembling penitent cast out. Whosoever will may come; and to every one who trusts in Him, Jesus gives everlasting life; not merely the promise of life in the hereafter, but the possession now of that principle of life which can never die. Even his body shall not be hurt of death, but shall be raised up at the last day in the likeness of Christ's glorious body. Redemption shall thus forever destroy both the power and the effects of sin. *J. P. T.*

If His love cannot reach you, then you cannot be reached, and if His love cannot save you, then you cannot be saved; for salvation is character, and love is the power by which only it is, or ever can be, wrought. Oh the perversity, blindness, hardness—apart from all thought of retribution we say it—that cannot be gained by all that God has done, or does, or shows, or suffers in His Son! *Bushnell.*

8. The sense of this verse is plain. The "giving up," is to hopeless ruin and desolation. So the parallel word—"deliver thee"—means to give over to the fell destroyer. "Admah and Zebaim" are associated with Sodom and Gomorrah as lying near in Gen. 14:8, and in Deut. 29:23 as involved in the same terrible doom. "Mine heart is turned within me"—with feelings of pity and grief and tender compassion. No words of comment can heighten the beauty and force of this inimitable passage. The very heart of the God of love stands

forth revealed in its glowing and expressive words.

The general strain of the message, sent of God by Hosea, had been of necessity stringent and stern with rebukes for sin, and oftentimes terrible in revelations of impending judgment—all right because absolutely necessary. Yet this strain, alone and exclusive, would not do full justice to the tenderness and the loving pity of Israel's God. These messages therefore cannot close without a most emphatic testimony to the lovingkindness of Jehovah. These testimonies concerning God prove: That He has no pleasure in bringing ruin on even the guiltiest sinner. That He does not punish in the spirit of vindictiveness. That He would always spare the sinner, and forbear to punish, or even chastise, if He could do so wisely and safely. That He takes supreme delight in conferring good, and longs to bless all His sentient creatures. That it is only with the deepest grief that He ever brings pain and woe upon His creatures. Hence, that He will never punish any sinner beyond his real deserts—never beyond what the good of the universe imperatively demands. That no sinner, however severely punished, can ever blame God. That all sinners are bound to do justice to the Divine love and pity, and should never impute to God feelings and motives which his own heart-utterances unmistakably preclude and forbid. Finally, that the character and government of such a God should command our unbounded and eternal confidence and love. H. C.

God pours out His whole heart of love in pleading, in yearning over His prodigal, erring child. He draws His stirring appeals from every topic which experience proves to carry weight with it. At one time He rolls over the sinner's head the thunders of retribution—He whispers into the ear of the conscience the nearness of death and judgment. At another, He arrays before him the blessings and comforts of a lot which has fallen in fair ground, and asks by an inward voice which will not be suppressed, whether these do not legitimately call for gratitude. At another, He pleads in yet more urgent strains the Sacrifice which He has provided to win back the allegiance of man—the Sacrifice which testifies to a love stronger than death, which the many waters of human indifference cannot quench, neither can the floods of ingratitude drown it. The God-man by His Word, by His ministers, by His Spirit, pleads the wounds which scarred His sacred body, and the pangs which rent His holy soul asunder, the strong crying which went up to

God from the depths of His unfathomable anguish, and the bitter tears which, in the days of His flesh, the malice of foes and the faithlessness of friends alike conspired to draw from Him. E. M. G.

9. It is in accommodation to finite minds that He represents a conflict in His own between His indignation against sin and His pity for the sinner. Such representations can scarcely mislead any except the captious and uncandid. In the phrase, "I will not *return* to destroy," the first verb is used adverbially, the sense being, "I will not *again* destroy." The reason given, "for I am God and not man," reminds us of those beautiful words of Isaiah (55: 8), "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." H. C.

Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of our God, whose thoughts and ways, in receiving returning sinners, are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth. It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies to remember that He is God, and not man. He is the Holy One. One would think this were a reason why He should reject such a provoking people; no, God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to His holiness, but very much to the honor of it; as He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and therein declares His righteousness, now Christ has purchased the pardon and He has promised it. H.

12. The Hebrew attaches this verse to the next chapter. In the course of thought it belongs there, and not at the close of this, since it reverts again to the perverseness, treachery and hypocrisy of Israel.

Chap. 12. In this chapter the prophet, besides bringing out yet more fully the sins of Ephraim and of Judah, seeks to encourage repentance and trust in God by referring to events in the early history of the patriarch Jacob—his taking the precedence of his brother Esau (verse 3): his prevailing prayer at Peniel, and his meeting with God at Bethel (verses 3-5).

3, 4. The name "Jacob," applied to the northern kingdom, helps the prophet to pass by an easy transition to the early history of the patriarch who bore this name. "He took his brother by the heel in the womb," indicating that he would supplant him in the matter of the birthright and of priority. See the history (Gen. 25: 26). The verb from which the name Jacob is derived means "to take by the heel," to supplant. No bad intention or purpose on Jacob's part should attach to this supplanting

as here spoken of. It simply indicated the purpose of God to put Jacob before Esau, although born last. This preference is alluded to in this passage to encourage the people to return to their own God. The next clause carries us to the celebrated scene of Peniel, where Jacob wrestled with the angel of the covenant in struggling prayer all night, and finally prevailed, "had power with God," and became a prince through his perseverance and success. The Lord gave him the name Israel, meaning a *prince with God*, at this very time, both to indicate and to honor his prevalence in prayer. (See Gen. 32 : 28.) "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The fourth verse might be rendered somewhat freely, thus: "And then he had power with the angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication to him. Also God met him (Jacob) at Bethel, and there spake with him and through him with us." The angel referred to is called God (Elohim) in verse 3, and can be no other than the uncreated angel of the covenant, who appears not unfrequently in the history of ancient Israel, manifesting Divine attributes, and obviously being the very Messiah, then, as ever, the Head of the Church on earth. H. C.

This short passage shows not only that the nocturnal contest of the patriarch had been, even in Hosea's time, long received as a fact, but also furnishes us with a key to the inner meaning which throws a new light on the scene itself, and from that point throws its beams far beyond. Hosea teaches us to see in Jacob's wrestling the turning point of his life—his conversion. This is not only in harmony with the narrative in Genesis, but the whole sketch of his life as there given is here presupposed. In verse 13 other circumstances are quoted from it. But Hosea further perceives in that night-struggle a fact which ought to be repeated in the life of the nation. That fact was the conquest of the impure original nature in that tearful and prayerful pleading with God, and being found of God in the long, earnest conflict in which God reveals Himself as Jehovah. That is the very idea and history of Israel as distinct from heathen nations. *Auberlen*.

Not the winning of the birthright, not the purloined blessing, not the visions of Bethel and of Mahanaim, but the wrestle at Jabbok was the critical point in Jacob's moral history. The wrestle was foreshadowed at Bethel. God's choice of Jacob for such a high destiny is a mystery. There is some reason for it in

the moral possibilities of the man which God knows, but which we cannot detect until we come to Jabbok. It comes out there; a moral fibre which has been overlaid by his cunning and conceit all these years, but which stiffens into moral muscle at the touch of the covenant angel. The very man of all others who, we should think, would break down at just such a moral crisis, whose life has given scarce a hint of the moral quality he develops in that struggle, comes out gloriously, with a tremendous force of will which faces God, and, breast to breast, and girdled with the arm of omnipotence, cries, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." He had been brought to a point where stratagem and strength alike failed; where he could only cling to God; where the issue was God's blessing or nothing. He won His blessing, and the supplanter was baptized anew as God's prince. *Vincent*.

Jacob got the victory and the blessing not by wrestling, but by clinging. We will not get victory in prayer until we too cease our struggling, give up our own will and throw our arms about our Father's neck in clinging faith. It is never the violence of wilfulness that prevails with God. It is the might of clinging faith that gets the blessings and the victories. It is not when we press and urge our own will, but when humility and trust unite in saying, "Not my will, but Thine." We are strong with God only in the degree that self is conquered and is dead. Not by wrestling, but by clinging, can we get the blessing. J. R. M.

What, then, is this silent, unseen wrestling but the summing up in vivid fashion of Jacob's whole life hitherto? Had he not, over and over again, been made aware that, with all his craft, he was in the silent grip of an unseen Power, which he could not shake off? Had not God been striving with him, by many sorrows and disappointments, hedging up his way? God had been seeking to educate Jacob all his life, and to beat the cunning and self-confidence out of him. He had tried to win the birthright by deceit. It had been a case of diamond cut diamond in his intercourse with Laban. And now he had been relying largely on his own skill to serve him in his interview with Esau. He could not be allowed to enter the land in such a mood. Not till he had learned to distrust himself and to trust God utterly was he fit to receive the inheritance. That wrestling was the symbol of all his past; and by it God continued His effort to break or bend an obstinate will, and to teach an earthly

nature to rise beyond its own tricks, and trust to God rather than to self. So God is ever wrestling with us. The purpose of all His dealings is to lead us away from reliance on our own skill and power, to bend our wills into pliable conformity with His. We have the awful, mysterious power of resisting Him. "Our wills are ours, we know not how," but instead of learning "to make them Thine," we struggle against the merciful Power which silently strives with us. The grasp that could crush is mercifully restrained, and so guided that it only lames Jacob. Must not Jacob have thought to himself, when that touch lamed him, "How easily could this antagonist have prevailed if he had put out all his power?" The withering of the shrunken sinew was but as an outward token of the shrivelling up of his natural self-confidence. To deliver us from ourselves and from trust in these is God's aim with us all. It is gain, not loss, to be thus dealt with.

The second stage of the wrestling begins at that point. "Let me go, for the day breaks." Jacob, then, still held fast by his antagonist, who, mighty as he was, could not go until Jacob had loosed his clutch. God desires to go, unless we desire to keep Him. Like Christ on the road to Emmaus, when He "made as if He would have gone further," and would assuredly have done so if the disciples had not said, "Abide with us," or, when walking on the sea, He would have passed by the boatful of terrified men if they had not called on Him, so this mighty wrestler wills to go, in order that the man who clings to him may strongly desire him to stay. If Jacob had not begun to divine the mystery of his visitant, he would scarcely have wished him to remain, nor have sought a blessing from him. We keep God by desiring Him. That petition, strangely compounded of conscious need and of felt power to hold the Unknown fast, is the kernel of the wrestling in its second stage, in which Jacob prevails. Hosea gives an inspired commentary on it when he tells us that "he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him" (Hos. 12:4), words which can only apply to the second stage of the incident, and which show that much earnest entreaty is condensed into the brief phrase, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Tears and prayers, these are the forces to put forth in that wrestling with God, which is possible for us all, on condition that our life of nature is broken. We overcome when we yield. "When I am weak,

then am I strong;" or, as Charles Wesley puts it in his noble hymn on this incident:

"Yield to me now, for I am weak,  
But confident in self-despair."

God prevails when we prevail, for His highest desire is to tarry with us and bless us; and when we prevail in prayer, it is by strength granted by Him, who gives His Spirit to dwell in and intercede for us. A. M.

5. This verse is a close continuation of the preceding. "There He spake with us, even the Lord God of hosts." In most English Bibles the name "*Lord*" is printed in small capitals when it translates the Hebrew word *Jehovah*. In this verse the Hebrew reads, "Even *Jehovah*, God of hosts—*Jehovah* is His memorial." By this is meant that the name *Jehovah* is that by which He would be specially known, or, more precisely, is that one of His various names whose significance He would have His people evermore remember, as to be fulfilled all along onward in the lapse of the ages. The true significance of this name is one faithful to His promises. The idea is that this faithfulness results from His immutability, and that His people do not fully *know* this attribute of God till they have tested and proved it in their experience of His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises. In this sense the name *Jehovah* stands through all time as His memorial name—its significance to be remembered by His people, and perpetually developed and fulfilled more and more in the lapse of ages. The significance of His other names may be verified and fulfilled at once; His omnipotence is seen in the creation of worlds and in every real miracle; but His name *Jehovah* is verified only *by the aid of time*, through the occurrence of events transpiring all along down the world's history. In this most expressive sense it is His memorial name, and is adduced by Hosea most fitly in this connection to encourage the people to put their trust in Him.

6. Hence the application here made, "Therefore," since God is forever faithful and true, since He ever has been and ever will be the God of His people Israel, "therefore, turn thou to thy God." "Keep mercy and judgment," duties toward man; "and wait on thy God continually," living in dependence upon Him, and expecting all needful good from Him alone. Morality toward man and piety toward God make up the sum of human duty—loving God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself. H. C.

*Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy*

*God continually.* Compare Micah 6 : 8, "to do justly" (literally "judgment") "and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." "Wait on thy God," let thy hope rest on thy God (Ps. 27 : 14 ; 37 : 34). This last command is also a statement of privilege ; acting in obedience to Jehovah, it will be Israel's happiness to be able to rely upon His help. "Continually," for sooner or later He will deliver thee, B. C.

7. This allusion to the trading usages of Canaan was shaped to take hold of the people of Ephraim, the more so because the latter, while in general holding the Canaanites in contempt, were yet trading, defrauding, and oppressing in the same way. H. C.

God has His eye upon merchants and traders when they are weighing their goods and paying their money, whether they do honestly or deceitfully ; He observes what balances they have in their hand, and how they hold them ; and though those they deal with may not be aware of that sleight of hand with which they make them balances of deceit, God sees it and knows it. Trades by the wit of man are made mysteries, but it is pity that by the sin of man they should ever be made mysteries of iniquity. H.

8. Ephraim quietly implies that *in trade* some little crookedness and deception are quite admissible (probably he would have said, Who can *live* by trade otherwise ?). But, on the other hand, there are things so flagrant that all the world will call them sin. He hopes, indeed he is quite sure, they will not find any of this bad sort of sin in his business life. So human nature and the usages and moralities of trade were much the same B.C. 750, when Hosea was writing, as they are to-day ! H. C.

"I am become rich, I have found me out substance." Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favors them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. It is folly to think that riches are things to be gloried in, and to say with exultation, I am become rich. Riches are not the honors of the soul, are not peculiar to the best men, nor sure to us ; and therefore let not the rich man glory in his riches (James 1 : 9, 10). It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way either does make us innocent, or will make

us safe, or may make us easy, in that way ; for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them. (See Isa. 47 : 10 ; Prov. 1 : 32.) He excuses the fraud, so that none condemned it. They shall find no iniquity in me, that were sin, nothing very bad, nothing but what is very excusable, only some venial sins, sins not worth speaking of, which they think God will make nothing of because they do. It is a fashionable iniquity, it is customary, it is what everybody does, it is pleasant, it is gainful, and this, they think, is no iniquity that is sin, nobody will think the worse of them for it ; but God sees not as man sees, He judges not as man judges. H.

9. Once more the prophet turns abruptly, as is his wont, to promises, yet again to try the power of persuasion and love on the people. "Yet I, the Lord thy God ever since Egypt" (*i.e.*, since the exodus from Egypt), "will yet make thee to dwell in tents," etc., with reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, the great national thanksgiving. This was always a joyful occasion. Hence this verse must be interpreted as a promise of good, and not a threatening of evil. H. C.

10. *Used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.* Commanding the prophet to perform symbolical actions ; as, in the case of Isaiah, going naked ; Jeremiah, binding himself ; Ezekiel, lying on one side ; not mourning for his wife ; Hosea's marriage ; and many other instances. *Bp. Horsley.*

11. This brief and abrupt allusion to Jacob was designed to suggest God's watchful care through His providence over His trustful children. This familiar history is found, Gen. chaps. 29-33. H. C.

12. This shows how unworthy and ungrateful this people were. In rejecting their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, which, in the preface to the commandments, is particularly a reason for the first, why they should have no other gods before Him. In despising and persecuting His prophets, whom they should have loved and valued, and have studied to answer God's end in sending them, for the sake of that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt, and preserved them in the wilderness. The benefit we have had by the Word of God greatly aggravates our sin and folly, if we put any slight upon the Word of God. H.

## HOSEA, CHAPTERS XIII., XIV.

**13:1** WHEN Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he exalted himself in Israel: but  
 2 when he offended in Baal, he died. And now they sin more and more, and have made them  
 molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them  
 the work of the craftsmen; they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves,  
 3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the  
 chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of  
 4 the chimney. Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know  
 5 no god but me, and beside me there is no saviour. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the  
 6 land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and  
 7 their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Therefore am I unto them as a  
 8 lion: as a leopard will I watch by the way: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of  
 her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart: and there will I devour them like a lion;  
 9 the wild beast shall tear them. It is thy destruction, O Israel, that *thou art* against me,  
 10 against thy help. Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy  
 11 judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I have given thee a king in mine  
 12 anger, and have taken him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his  
 13 sin is laid up in store. The sorrows of a travelling woman shall come upon him: he is an  
 unwise son; for it is time he should not tarry in the place of the breaking forth of children.  
 14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death,  
 where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction? repentance shall be hid from  
 15 mine eyes. Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the breath  
 of the LORD coming up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his foun-  
 16 tain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. Samaria shall bear  
 her guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants  
 shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

**14:1** O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.  
 2 Take with you words, and return unto the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity,  
 3 and accept that which is good: so will we render *as bullocks the offering of* our lips. Asshur  
 shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work  
 4 of our hands, *Ye are our gods*: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their  
 5 backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as  
 6 the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His  
 branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.  
 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as the corn*, and blossom  
 8 as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim *shall say*, What  
 have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green  
 9 fir tree; from me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?  
 prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall  
 walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

**Chap. 13.** The main drift of this chapter is to set forth the sins of Ephraim and their certain consequences in his ruin—intermingled with some rich assurances of God's love and promises of mercy and help to the penitent.

**1.** I translate: "When Ephraim spake, there was trembling; he stood high in Israel; but when he sinned in the matter of Baal, he died." Ephraim, as here used, is the one tribe only, not the whole ten. In the early days of the kingdom the influence of this tribe was very great; the word of Ephraim was law,

and was heard with trembling. His sin in the matter of Baal proved the ruin of his influence and of himself.

**2. They say.** The priests, who had the management of idol worship, gave the order that the men who offered sacrifice should kiss the calves. This ceremony was one form of expressing their reverence, confidence and affection for these calves. II. C.

**3.** The tone of indignant derision passes into that of stern wrath. The inflexibility of the purpose to punish is expressed by the accumu-



lation of four several images, all describing utter extermination. The "morning cloud" and "dew" vanish wholly and rapidly in the heat of the sun. (Cf. chap. 6: 4.) The image of "chaff whirled away by the blast from the threshing-floor" occurs repeatedly, as Ps. 1: 4; 35: 5; Isa. 17: 13. The utter dissipation of "smoke" is referred to in Ps. 68: 2. B. C.

They promise themselves safety and satisfaction in the worship of their idols, and that their prosperity will thereby be established; but God tells them that they shall be disappointed, and driven away in their wickedness. This is illustrated by four similitudes. They shall be: 1. As the morning cloud, which promises showers of rain to the parched ground. 2. As the early dew, which seems to be an earnest of such showers; but both pass away, and the day proves as dry and hot as ever; so fleet and transitory their profession of piety was (chap. 6: 4), and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them; and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed, and so will all theirs be that make an idol of this world. 3. They are as the chaff, light and worthless; and they shall be driven as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor (Ps. 1: 4). Nay, 4. They are as the smoke, noisome and offensive; and they shall be driven away as the smoke out of the chimneys, that is soon dissipated and disappears (Ps. 68: 2). No solid, lasting comfort is to be expected anywhere but in God. H.

4. Yet fearful as their doom must be, and great as their guilt had been, the Lord reminds them that He has been their God ever since the nation came out from Egypt. He evinced this relationship to them then, and had done nothing on His part since to change it. H. C.

This and the following verses are an introduction to the gracious promises that follow (verses 9-14 and chap. 14), and import that God will never utterly forget the promises made to their fathers. W. Louth.

6. The better God made their condition, or, in the prophet's figure, the better pasture He put them into, the more they were sated; this fulness begat pride; and in their pride they forgot Jehovah. Alas, that this should be the history of so many myriads of sinners! God blesses them (must we say) too much; they become too full; then proud; then they forget God, and become awfully strong in their wickedness! H. C.

Their unworthy ungrateful abuse of God's favor to them. God not only took care of them

in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture. And (verse 6) according to their pasture, so were they filled. God gave them both plenty and dainties, and they did not spare it, but having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan, they fed themselves to the full. And this was no hopeful presage; it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and had learned to deny themselves; but what was the effect of it? They were filled, and their heart was exalted. Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent and secure. It is sad that those favors which ought to make us mindful of God, and studious what we shall render to Him, should make us unmindful of Him, and regardless what we do against Him. We ought to know that we live upon God, when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles. H.

7, 8. The figures to represent swift destruction are multiplied. To "observe," as the leopard, is to lie in wait and watch as for prey. God represents Himself as doing what is done instrumentally by the Assyrian arms. H. C.

9. In Hosea, havee has been made among favorite texts. For example, in chap. 13: 9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help," becomes, "It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against Me, against thy help." Give it time, and the new text will yield as many good sermons as the old. Chambers.

The common version expresses rich truths with great force. Thou art thine own destroyer; thy God thine only deliverer. The destruction is wholly thine; the salvation altogether Mine. But the strong objection to our received translation is the proposition *against* before the last word, "thy help." The English translation makes no account of it; but Hosea does not put in words for nothing. Then also the connecting particle more naturally means *because* than *but*. In this construction we miss the strong antithesis, but we get a pertinent sense, and one in harmony with the previous and following context; thus verse 8, The Assyrian power shall devour thee: verse 9, This destruction is all of thine own procuring, because thou wast against Me, against thy only help: verse 10, Where is thy king now, or any one that can save thee? etc. H. C.

Are not the words which here fall from the lips of the Divine Healer like to these? "All

others may have forsaken thee, but I have not forsaken. I who know all the saddest secrets of thy soul am willing to take thy cause in hand. Others may despair of thee; thou mayest despair of thyself; but I do not despair. There is balm in My Gilead, and I am wise to heal and mighty to save. In Me, if only thou wilt know it and believe it, in Me is thy help." *Trench.*

**11.** This statement was true of Saul, and no less so of many of the kings in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. But if we ask for the particular king referred to, no one meets the conditions so well as the last, Hosea. II. C.

**12.** "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, their sin is hid." Not that his sin was hid from God, but his sin is hid—that is, it is recorded, it is laid up against a day of reckoning. That this is the meaning is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is bound up: as the clerk of the assizes binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and at the assizes brings out the indictments, and reads them in court, so God binds up men's sins in a bundle, and, at the Day of Judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels. *Watson.*

**13.** The figure in the first clause suddenly changes. Ephraim is first a mother in her travail pains; then an infant voluntarily regarding his own birth, and thus fearfully imperilling both his own life and the mother's. No figures drawn from human experience can be more forcible than this—the peril that ensues when "children come to the birth and there is not strength to bring forth." If, now, to get the full force of this passage as applied to Ephraim, we suppose the son to bring on this danger by his own voluntary, intelligent agency, we shall see the infatuation and very madness which Hosea so temperately describes as being "unwise." Ephraim is going to the judgment with God in charge of all his sins, and he still lingers under the call to repent, and will not make peace with his offended judge. The primary reference here is to judgments on earth, and very near; yet the principle is even more pertinent and forcible as applied to every sinner going to the final judgment.

**14.** Ephraim is seen ruining himself by his madness. The figure in the prophet's mind suggests death in some of its most painful forms; but God interposes, saying, "I will ransom thee from Sheol; I will redeem thee from death." Sheol, the grave, and death are, of course, personified here, and supposed to be

living agents of terrific power over frail mortals. The words as they stand here do not refer to the resurrection, but to salvation from the ruin then impending over Israel; but Paul's quotation (1 Cor. 15: 55) applies them to the resurrection—the final triumph of our frail mortality over death and the grave, under the power of a resurrection to unfading life and immortality. The words are beautifully applicable to the latter event, and are, therefore, fitly used. II. C.

The ultimate grounds on which the prophetic doctrine of the resurrection rests are, *first*, the knowledge of the *living God*, who has power even over death and the regions of the dead (Deut. 32: 39; 1 Sam. 2: 6); and proves that He has this power in those cases in which He recalls the dead to life at the request of His prophets. It rests, *secondly*, upon the importance of *human personality*, which is called to communion with God. Still it is not of the vanquishing of death in the cases of individuals that prophecy chiefly treats, but of the eternal duration of the Church. This is guaranteed by the eternity of God, who is an inexhaustible source of life even to His perishing people (Isa. 40: 28 sqq.). When the heavens wax old as doth a garment, and are changed as a vesture, He remains *the same*, and therefore the seed of His servants shall outlast these changes of the universe. And this very fact, that the Church rises again in renewed vigor after apparent destruction, is also represented as her resurrection from death. This is done first in two passages of Hosea—viz., 6: 2 and 13: 14. In the former, the people are introduced as turning to God in their hour of need, and saying, though still in a hesitating manner, "After two days He will *revive us*, in the third" (*i.e.*, after a short delay) "He will *raise us up*, and we shall live before Him." That which is here expressed as the hope of the people, the fulfilment of which cannot be promised in their present state of inconstancy, appears in the second passage as a saying of God. The very variously understood train of ideas from verse 12 onward is as follows: The afflictions of Israel are to be the pangs by which a new nation shall be born. But the people will not suffer this to come to pass. "They are as an unwise son; when the time is come, he does not enter the place of the breaking forth of children." The anxiety for both mother and child, when it does not come to the birth, forms the transition to verse 14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, where are thy plagues?"

O grave, where is thy destruction?" As much as to say, And yet this people have a God who is capable of delivering them from even such a state of death, because the powers of death cannot prevail against Him. Since, however, the people resist their deliverance, it is also added that the storm of judgment shall sweep them away. Hence the victory over death here spoken of is merely hypothetical, and assumed to pertain to the Church in general. *Guthrie*.

Death had plucked the crown from the brows of kings, and darkened the eyes of seers, and sealed the lips of prophets, and mocked the skill of man, and crushed the strength of giants; and, as Solomon says, in the war with him, men had found "no discharge." But how do the fortunes of battle change when Christ, our Champion, the Captain of our salvation, comes into the field! Calling out, "O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!" He takes the prey from the spoiler; and not only in our souls, washed in His blood and sanctified by His Spirit, redeems the jewel, but the casket too—for that purpose descending into the realms of the grave, with garments rolled in blood. The brow that bled beneath a crown of thorns now wears the diadem of victory; and now, where the eyes of men saw but a ghastly spectacle, a mangled body suspended on a tree, with the setting sun lighting up its dead, defaced, and pallid countenance, faith beholds the triumph of redeeming love—the crowning work and glory of the Son of God; and pointing to that sacred form which has death and the serpent lying crushed beneath its feet, she addresses men and angels, saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed the enemy in pieces."

What was once probable is now certain. The heathens had immortality in its shadow; we have the substance. It is not a fancy now, but a certainty. Life and immortality, the objects of a believer's hope, are clearly brought to light by the Gospel; and that grand old prophecy is fulfilled, was fulfilled on the cross by its expiring, yet rejoicing and conquering victim, "O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction." The object of this hope, the grandest man can cherish or mind aspire to, allies us to Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, forever; whose life knows no end and His happiness no change. It is not that life which, brief as it is, men dread to lose, and the dying would buy at the

price of a fortune; which the woman in the Gospel spent all she had to preserve; which kings account of greater value than their crowns; nobles, than their titles; a miser, than his glittering heaps of gold. The hope of the Christian is immortal life—the purchase of a Saviour's blood—the boon which God that cannot lie promised before the world began. It is begun on earth, for in the germs and seeds of it he that believeth, as the Bible says, hath eternal life—much as the tree has the leaves and flowers of next year wrapped up in the buds of this. Commenced at the new birth and consummated in the hour of death, it is enjoyed in that world where there is neither woe nor want; nor griefs, nor graves; nor sickness of body, nor sorrow of heart; nor cares, nor sighs, nor sin; where the crown hides no thorn, and the heart bleeds from no secret wound; the sky wears no cloud, and day never darkens into night. Into such blessedness believers enter at death. Such blessedness has their God and Saviour laid up for all those that love Him. What hopes, what happiness like theirs! Now, said one, I can shake hands with death; Save Christ's, said another, no countenance to me so beautiful as death's! Enjoying this hope the believer may walk in perpetual sunlight, and go singing on his way to heaven. Under her eye how do all things change—sick-beds, losses, disappointments, bereavements? They throw their furnace-light on the face of Jesus, as sitting by the fire, a refiner, He purifies, not destroys His gold; and the death-struggle itself, with its tossings and groans and pains, appears as the effort of a bird to burst its shell, of the insect to shatter its case and enter on a new and bright existence. *Guthrie*.

"I congratulate you and myself," wrote John Foster to a friend, "that life is passing fast away. What a superlatively grand and consoling idea is that of death! Without this radiant idea, this delightful morning star, indicating that the luminary of eternity is going to rise, life would, to my view, darken into midnight melancholy. Oh, the expectation of living *here*, and living *thus* always, would be indeed a prospect of overwhelming despair. But thanks to that fatal decree that dooms us to die, thanks to that Gospel which opens the visions of an endless life, and thanks, above all, to that Saviour friend who has promised to conduct all the faithful through the sacred trance of death into scenes of Paradise and everlasting delight."

**Chap. 14.** This short chapter is a fit and

striking sequel to the Book of Hosea, almost the entire strain of which sets forth the sins—the ingratitude, incorrigibility and the coming doom of the apostate children of Israel. But the Lord cannot let this stern message of rebuke and threatening close without one more call to repentance. After so much said of judgment and wrath, a wrong impression as to these points might be left if the book were to close without yet another testimony to His merciful compassion. How tenderly careful not to crush out hope from even the guiltiest bosom, saying, “I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before Me and the souls which I have made” (Isa. 57: 16). Yet again, the strain of this closing chapter really *glows* with the beauty and joy of God’s restored people when they repose under His shadow and drink at His fountain of bliss—all in charming contrast with the utter blight that falls on the wicked who pasture themselves on wind and chase after the east wind, and whose best delights turn to ashes on their lips. In this point of view, this closing chapter must be taken as a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of the cause and kingdom of God on earth. II. C.

Living throughout the long period of anarchy and disintegration, witnessing and grieving over the degradation and wretchedness of the people, which increased with their determined rejection of all God’s still offered mercies, the prophecies of Hosea are naturally dark and sad. There is throughout a blending of accusation and threatening, of pathetic remonstrance and touching promise. Only this closing chapter is full of the hopeful spirit of that future restoration which it predicts. But it was never fulfilled to the kingdom of Israel. To that people *this promise of revival*, like all other promises of God, was conditional upon the return indicated in verses 1-3. They returned *not*, and within five years were captives and forever exiled from their land. Only in the history of the Christian Church, to whom *all the promises have descended, has this rich, bright promise of revival been repeatedly fulfilled, as it shall continue to be realized to the end of time.* In considering this prophecy, therefore, we have to bear in mind the double reference to the nation of Israel, and to God’s spiritual Israel in all subsequent ages. Under the most beautiful imagery, it suggests the elements of spiritual experience and acting, by which God’s favor is restored and maintained; and it contains God’s own pledge of the richest, sweetest and most satisfying blessings. Than this,

therefore, no prophecy of the Old Testament can be more attractive and instructive.

**1-3.** *Return to God by penitent prayer and praise, and by renunciation of evil-doing.* In forsaking God, Israel had broken the two great commandments. They had accepted and worshipped other gods, and had violated the moral laws of the second table. So man has done. Self-worship, or other false worship—that is, a disregard of God’s supreme claims—has led to a disregard of man’s equal claims. By simply returning to God, accepting His control and receiving His grace, the soul is filled with supreme devotion to Him, and so is led to a true neighborly love. Thus the two great commandments are obeyed. So would it have been with Israel had this earnest entreaty of Hosea been responded to. So will it be with every soul truly responding to this tender entreaty.

Touching and instructive are the “*words*” which the Holy Ghost here supplies to the returning penitent. Take with you *words*, in place of *sacrifices* (the calves of the *lips*, instead of the calves offered for sacrifice) which are now done away, because the reality they vaguely typified is fulfilled. “*Words*” (in Hebrew *things real*) refer to heartfelt *confessions*, expressions of *reliance upon God’s mercy* and *praises* for that forgiving and cleansing mercy. These exercises of spirit are implied in the words the returning penitent is here bidden to utter (verse 2). In verse 3 follows the renunciation of the three long besetting sins of Israel. They had sought help from Assyria, instead of depending upon Jehovah. They had transgressed an explicit Divine command (Deut. 17: 16) by procuring horses (for chariots and cavalry) from Egypt. They had worshipped image gods, the work of their own hands. In none of these defences as helpers will they longer trust, for now they realize that they are left Fatherless and helpless. But their new experience assures them that in Jehovah they have still a Father, in whose mercy alone they now hope for help and look for deliverance. Simply, clearly and admirably do these expressions intimate the way of the transgressor’s return to God. The exercises of spirit acceptable to God and the elements of every saving experience are summed up in heartfelt confession of sin, implicit reliance upon God’s mercy, and grateful praise of His grace, joined with the renunciation of human help, and of all idolatrous and worldly self-seeking. B.

**1.** *Return unto the Lord.* More closely, “*return quite home to the Lord.*” The preposition, denoting the complete attainment of the

object sought, points to the entireness of the repentance required. Absolute as the prediction of Israel's destruction in chap. 13: 14-16 at first sight appears, it was, however, still contingent upon Israel's continued impenitency; as indeed was indicated in verse 13. Even yet it may be averted by a thoroughgoing repentance. "Thy God;" for that relation is not yet finally dissolved. B. C.

Repentance is to forget *all but God*, to have the soul filled with thoughts of God, to feel that God can do everything, that man must be safe and happy in the arms of God—accursed and undone apart from God. It is to turn away from the world and from sin and from the devil; and, full of love and sorrow—love to the God who saves, sorrow for the sin that destroys—to cleave to the arm of Omnipotence, and to rest in the embrace of redeeming mercy. *Stoughton.*

God has promised forgiveness to your repentance; but He has not promised to-morrow to your procrastination. *Augustine.*

3. The returning penitents pledge themselves specifically against three sins: seeking help from Assyria; from the use of horses in war, usually brought from Egypt; and saying any more to what is only the work of their own hands, "Ye are our gods." The reason given is ample—"In God, the fatherless find mercy"—the helpless and forlorn, like ourselves, find compassion in Him. H. C.

*For in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* God is often said to take especial care of "the fatherless." He gives particular command "not to afflict any fatherless child" (Ex. 22: 22); He doth "execute the judgment of the fatherless" (Deut. 10: 18); He is therefore styled "the helper of the fatherless" (Ps. 10: 14); and "a Father" to them (Ps. 68: 5); and it is delivered as an expression of exceeding great anger toward the people, that "He will not have mercy on their fatherless" (Isa. 9: 17). The Israelites, therefore, being now in such a condition as may be well signified by the appellation of "fatherless," are taught to take with them in their address to God that name, of great efficacy in moving Him to mercy, and even challenging it as a privilege. *Pocock.*

4. The Lord Himself now speaks in response to their vows and prayers. "Heal them of their backslidings" means restore them both in heart and in the external life. "Will love them *freely*"—the last most expressive word having the sense of *spontaneous*—with warm and full heart, even as the blessed God of

love is wont to love the truly penitent soul. H. C.

4-8. *The responsive expression of God's love and favor to the returning penitent.* With natural images of great variety and beauty, the largest, most precious and satisfying promises are clustered in these anticipatory words of ancient prophecy. Nor must we omit to notice the attractive and endearing characters by which God here introduces Himself. He is the Healer of the otherwise incurably seated disease of *apostasy*. He is the Father, whose love is free and full, carrying with it not only the utter removal of anger, but the giving of Himself and of all His infinite resources to restore, to beautify and to bless. This giving, and the richness and variety of His resources, are set forth at length in the five figures contained in the verses following. He likens Himself to the *dew*, because of its abundance and constancy of silent, invisible force, refreshing and invigorating the inner life of plant and flower. Therefore the dew and rain are always the scriptural emblems of the work of the Holy Spirit. With this promised Divine influence, the quickened soul shall grow upward, like the rapid, luxuriantly productive *lily*, with its exceeding fragrance and beauty; and, like the deeply rooted *cedars of Lebanon*, shall be established upon a foundation deep and immovable as the mountain itself. Like the *olive-tree* (verse 6), which sends up shoots in all directions from its roots, the hidden spiritual life is constantly increasing in force and widening in influence. In this increase and reach, it also resembles the olive, whose "form is so regular, and whose lower branches spread out in so complete and graceful a circle, that it possesses a beauty all its own." A life thus divinely inwrought, nourished and increasing in force, must have power of communicating itself, and of producing effects upon others. And this is the fact stated in the seventh verse. "They that dwell under his shadow," that enjoy the refreshing, reviving effect of this spiritual shelter and helping force, shall sprout or shoot forth like the buried corn; they shall put forth or blossom like the vine; and they shall bring forth fruit, like the perfected product of Lebanon's vine. First, life bursting forth from the seed-germ, then blossoming with the promise, and at length beautiful with fruitage, this process and progress of Divine power is here promised in connection with spiritual force faithfully exerted by living Christian souls.

The eighth verse seems to be a brief sum-

mary of all these Divine promises. "Because," says Jehovah, "Ephraim, or the returning spiritual Israelite, has renounced his idols, I have heard his penitent confession and trust, and have regarded him with favor. To him, like the ever green, sheltering fir-tree (or cypress), I will afford continual protection. From Me, as the ever-living root of spiritual life, shall he bring forth a perpetual fruitage of good." A parallel expression is found, Ps. 91 : 14, "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known My name." B.

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers of returning Israel; they seek God's face, and they shall not seek in vain; God will be sure to meet them in a way of mercy, who return to Him in a way of duty. If we speak to God in good prayers, God will speak to us in good promises; as He answered the angel with good words and comfortable words (Zech. 1 : 13). If we take with us the forgoing words, in our coming to God, we may take home with us these following words for our faith to feast upon; and these answer those. II.

So many times as the believing soul backslides, so many times God brings him back again. He renews His pardons and multiplies them. Yea, for aught I know, there are some saints, and they not long-lived either, that must receive before they enter into life millions of pardons from God for these; and every pardon is an act of grace through the redemption that is in Christ's blood. *Bunyan*.

Luther speaks somewhere of passages of Scripture which would be worth fetching from Rome to Wittenberg, crawling on our knees. Should not in our estimation this Gospel message of the Old Testament be included in such a list? Like a threatening tempest dispersed and superseded by a bright sunbeam, is this passage in the prophecy of Hosea; here at the close the most terrible menace is exchanged for the most glorious promise, and unexpectedly the preacher of repentance stands before our eyes as the friendly evangelist. How much is here declared in a few words to Israel, and assuredly not to Israel alone! The *healing* of that which is the deepest source of all internal and external pain and misery, that inward repugnance of the heart destitute of fellowship with God to seek that which is to be found in Him alone. Compassion which, moved by nothing but itself, feels and exhibits love, not because man is deserving, but be-

cause God is so bountiful and kind. *Refreshing*, such as the field which in the rainless season languished from drought, enjoys in summer when its scorched face is sprinkled with the tender dew. *Growth*, finally, as beautiful as that of the blooming lily, which uplifts its crowned head in the bright sunshine; as powerful as that of the mountains ascending toward heaven, while their roots are lost in the depths of the earth. And all this is not merely beautiful words; they may become reality, the certainty of which is stamped by every genuine spiritual experience of life; these are blessings within the reach of all who learn to pray with Israel (verse 3), "Thou art our God; for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Yea, in the humble supplication of the soul stands here, as it were, written down the reply on God's side; a reply unspeakably invigorating to him who, having descended from his fancied heights, has learned to call upon his God out of the depths. *Van O.*

5. There are some Christians who have a very distinct perception of the Gospel in its freeness and fulness, but they have ceased to derive from it the comfort they once enjoyed. They need the rain. They have been too neglectful of the secret life of religion, which is its soul. They have been, if not falling into habitual sin, yet treading only the hard round of some outward duties, and avoiding communion of soul with God. This is to grieve the Holy Spirit, and so to lose His seal. What these need is, more earnest prayer for His refreshing influences, and a heart open to welcome them and use them; "I will be as the dew unto Israel; and they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." Our souls can only live and grow when the sun and the showers intermingle; when the Spirit's dew comes by night, and the Gospel brings in the day. Then it shall be with us as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth, by the clear shining after rain. *Ker*.

7. "His shadow" is that of God—perhaps suggested by the tacit allusion to the cedars of Lebanon, whose shade is magnificent. The word rendered *seent*, in the last clause, is *memorial*—the same used 12 : 5—meaning, they shall be renowned in fame, as the wine of Lebanon which has to this day the highest repute. II. C.

8. "I am as a green pine-tree; from Me is thy fruit found." In response to Ephraim's renouncing all other trust, Jehovah asserts His

all-sufficiency for His people. He it is that will hear Ephraim's prayers; that will watch over him, no longer "hiding His face;" that will give him refreshing shade, and supply him with every blessing natural or spiritual. B. C.

9. *The prophet's final exhortation and comprehensive declaration.* The wise and prudent shall understand all these inspired teachings; therefore, he exhorts, "Ask wisdom of God, who giveth to all liberally, and it shall be given." And he sums up these teachings in the declaration, that *God's ways are righteous*; that the *just*—*i. e.*, the justified by faith (as Paul interprets the term), *shall walk in them*, but the *transgressors shall fall therein*. This, therefore, is the prophet's conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. We only add, as a single impressive suggestion, the solemn fact that *this was the last call of God to Israel*, containing the tenderest words of entreaty and the richest promises, on condition of repentance and return to God. This call, like all that preceded it, was disregarded; its condition was not fulfilled; and Israel, so long loved and favored of God, was destroyed and scattered over the earth by His judgment. So will it be with every soul that similarly disregards the same loving call of God. The end of such continued impenitence is His irreversible judgment. It brings eternal, remediless doom! B.

"Who is wise, that he may understand these things? a man of understanding, that he may know them?" This solemn proclamation challenges attention to the prophet's message. It is similar in import to, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

"For *straight* are the ways of the Lord, and the righteous shall *go on* in them, but transgressors shall fall therein." Since the course of spiritual and moral obedience, prescribed to us by God's law, must bring us into the most perfect harmony with His own course of procedure in the government of the world, those who faithfully walk therein may confidently expect, not only the Divine aid in their endeavors thus to live, but also the Divine blessing through the orderings of His providence both here and hereafter. "Go on;" the righteous *endeavor* to walk in them, and find that they really *can* do so; they move forward steadily, and without meeting with any real obstacle, even to the very end and goal of their journey. "Transgressors," those who are minded to gainsay God's revelations and refuse

to obey His laws, find in them, as they think, plentiful occasion for doubt, for disbelief, for disobedience; but the Word of God will in fallibly avenge itself sooner or later in their utter confusion and overthrow. B. C.

God's ways are altogether right; the just, in the sense of upright, honest and sincere, shall walk in them with peace and gladness through usefulness and honor here to a blissful end hereafter; but transgressors, whom no truth can reach to bless, shall stumble and fall under the very influences that bring salvation to the just.

Such are the lessons of this richly instructive Book of Hosea. We shall need to go far to find other writings more forcible, more tersely written, more beautiful in their poetic imagery, more burning in their rebukes of sin, and more glowing in their testimonies to the deep compassion and yearning love of God toward sinful man. H. C.

Entering into the promises, Hosea obtained the spirit of hope, the only source out of which a spirit of true hope can ever rise. He repeated them as one who believed in them and rejoiced in them. This spirit of hope appears when he takes the poor, torn, bleeding children of Israel by the hand, and says, "Let us return unto the Lord; He will heal us; He will bind us up." "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." This spirit of hope is breathed in the exhortation, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy: break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you." And this spirit of hope blends with the prophet's final entreaty that Israel would turn to the Lord, because "in Him the fatherless findeth mercy."

Hope is one of the most beautiful traits of character unfolded in the ministry of Hosea. We honor him for his faithfulness, and love him for his hope. And it was hope that made him strong, brave, patient and loving. It was hope that fitted him to do his work as a minister, which sustained and comforted him as a man. There was hope in his patriotism and hope in his piety, hope for himself and for his countrymen. Nor can we labor and suffer and endure without hope. Without hope we cannot serve God and save men. Without hope our hearts will sink, or they will become callous. Without hope for ourselves we shall give up our work; without hope for others we shall do it harshly, and no love will blend with it to give it beauty.

We thank thee, thou prophet of the living God, for this example of hope, amid the burdens and cares of human life; amid the sins and perils of the nation; amid the backslidings and afflictions of the Church; amid the troubles

and sorrows of our own souls! If Judaism was a religion of hope, so is the Gospel: a religion of better and brighter hope—of hope based on fuller, clearer, more explicit promises—of hope in Christ. *Stoughton.*

## PROPHECY OF JOEL.

THE precise date and duration of the prophetic life of Joel may be conjectured, but cannot be certainly known. He is not named elsewhere in the Old Testament Scriptures. His prophecy seems to be quoted both by Amos (cf. Amos 1:2 with Joel 3:16) and by Isaiah (cf. Isa. 13:6 with Joel 1:15). Amos prophesied at some period within the long reigns of Uzziah of Judah, B.C. 811-759, and of Jeroboam II. of Israel, B.C. 825-784. Hence, if the writings of Joel were in the hands of Amos, he cannot have prophesied *later* than the reign of Uzziah; he may have been many years earlier. His book shows that he prophesied in Judah, and that the temple worship was then kept up. Remarkably, the book does not notice the kingdom of the Ten Tribes nor the sin of idolatry. The people are exhorted to repentance, to fasting, weeping and rending of the heart. It may be inferred that in such a book idolatry would have been rebuked if it had been then prevalent. Some have argued, from his silence respecting the Syrian power, while he mentions Tyre and Sidon (3:4) as enemies, that he must have lived before their first invasion of Judah in the time of Ahab (reigned B.C. 918-897. See 1 K. chaps. 20-22.) But this cannot be conclusive, since he might know the Syrian kingdom as an enemy, and yet not mention it. Some weight is rightly given to the fact that the compilers of these sacred books have placed Joel between Hosea and Amos. In general, they observed the order of time, and it is safe to assume that, living so near the age of those prophets, they must have known with a fair measure of accuracy when Joel lived and wrote. II. C.

Joel, we may consider, was the earliest prophet of the kingdom of Judah, a contemporary of Hosea in the northern kingdom, and followed in quick succession in Judah by

Isaiah, who quotes a sentence from him (13:6), and by Micah. It is this position which gives such an exceeding interest to two of the predictions contained in his book. B. C.

Many of the Hebrew prophets are rather voices to us than men—voices crying in the past, and saying, "Repent." Of the men themselves we know nothing but the names. At times we can fix neither their date nor place. Of Joel, for example, we know absolutely nothing but what may be gathered from his prophecy; and that tells us neither when nor where he flourished, save by hints and implications which are still variously read. That he lived in Judah, probably in Jerusalem, we may infer from the facts that he never mentions the northern kingdom of Israel, and that he shows himself familiar with the Temple, the priests, the ordinances of worship; he moves through the sacred city and the temple of the Lord as one who is at home in them, as one who is native and to the manner born. On this point the commentators are pretty well agreed; but no sooner do we ask, "*When did Joel live and prophesy?*" than we receive the most diverse and contradictory replies. He has been moved along the chronological lines of at least two centuries, and fixed now here, now there, at almost every point. I prefer, on the whole, the theory which holds him to have been the earliest of the prophets whose writings have come down to us. There are hints in his poem, or prophecy, which indicate, I think, that it must have been written in the ninth century before Christ (circa 870-860), more than a hundred years before Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting on His throne, high and lifted up," and some fifty years after Elijah was carried "by a whirlwind into heaven."

Joel's style is that of the earlier age. So marked, indeed, is "the antique vigor and im-



perativeness of his language," that purely on this ground, Ewald, whose fine critical instinct deserves a respect which his dogmatism often averts, places him without a doubt first in the rank of the earlier prophets, and makes him the contemporary of Joash. The inference is still further confirmed by the prevailing tone and spirit of his prophecy, in which he differs greatly from "the goodly fellowship" to which he belongs. He does not once refer to the *idolatrous* rites and customs which they perpetually rebuke. Though the Hebrews are a sinful nation, and by their guilt have provoked Divine judgment, yet, in the pages of Joel, Jehovah is still recognized as their God and King; the simple but stately worship of the Temple is maintained, priests and people keep the feasts and observe the ordinances to do them. Now, curiously enough, this exceptional state of general conformity to the law and ritual of Moses obtained in the years which preceded the Aramean invasion, the earlier years of Joash's reign, and in hardly any other period to which Joel has been assigned. So that the absence of allusion to foreign wars and invasions, the antique severity of his style, and the religious condition reflected from his pages, combine to indicate the earlier half of King Joash's reign as the period of Joel's prophetic activity. Yet we must not dogmatize. All we can say is, that in all probability the son of Pethuel lived in Jerusalem during the reign of Joash; that he aided Jehoiada, the high priest, in urging the citizens to repair the Temple and to recur to the service of Jehovah, and that his prophecy is the oldest in our hands. *S. Cox.*

#### *Occasion of the Prophecy.*

This was a twofold national calamity—drought and locusts. Two questions have been raised by interpreters: 1. Whether locusts and their devastations are actually spoken of, or whether they are to be taken figuratively for the invasion and ravages of hostile armies. 2. Whether the prophet refers to a present calamity or prophecies of a future one. The symbolical interpretation is that which the ancient Jews and Christian fathers generally adopted; but since the Reformation the literal interpretation has been much more in favor. This interpretation was adopted by Luther and Calvin; and almost all the biblical scholars of Germany of the present day are inclined to it. Umbreit wavered between two opinions, and ended in thinking that the prophet meant to include both. The reasons assigned against a

literal invasion of locusts may be explained in harmony with a literal interpretation. We know that God used real locusts in punishing the Egyptians (Ex. 10: 12). Locusts are threatened as an instrument of punishment (Deut. 28: 38). Locusts are mentioned as a scourge in Solomon's prayer (1 K. 8: 37); and Amos describes a plague of locusts (4: 9). It is possible, therefore, that the prophet refers to a visitation of real and actual locusts, which are, at the same time, types of still further scourges. *C. Elliott.*

That God had already used real locusts as an instrument of punishment, we know by the Egyptian plague (Ex. 10: 12). That real locusts were dreaded by the Israelites, as one of their chief scourges, we know by the prayer of Solomon (1 K. 8: 37) and from the Pentateuch (Deut. 28: 38). Amos describes a real locust plague (4: 6, 9) as having lately occurred (which, indeed, *may* be the same as that which Joel declares imminent). Joel's description throughout is confessedly and plainly of a locust scourge; and his comparison of the locusts with men of war certainly suggests, and perhaps proves, that men of war were *not* designed to be metaphorically represented by them, for he would not have compared the locusts to men if by the locusts he had meant men. B. C. (See Bib. Com., vi. 496.)

Now that travellers and naturalists have made us better acquainted with the phenomena which attend a flight of locusts and the horrible ruin they leave behind them, it is generally admitted that Joel's description is no whit exaggerated; that we need not invent or supply armies and invasions to account for the terror and misery which his language breathes. Where the locust swarms descend, all vegetation instantly vanishes; they spare neither bark nor root, much less leaf and flower. They darken the air so that the sun, and even men at a little distance, become invisible. They advance in a close military array, which yields to no obstacle of stream or fire. As they advance a peculiar roaring noise is heard, like that of a torrent or a waterfall. No sooner do they settle to eat than, as Volney puts it, the grating sound of their mandibles reminds one of "the foraging of an invisible army." Indeed, no army of men could well work a devastation so complete as that wrought by an interminable flight of locusts, such as visits the lands of the far East, and even Algeria, to this day. And as the locusts are an adequate explanation of even the strongest phrases of Joel, we need seek no other. *S. Cox.*

*Style of Joel.*

Its chief characteristic is perhaps simple vividness. Everything is set before us as though we ourselves saw it. This is alike the character of the description of the desolation of the first chapter, the advance of the locusts in the second, or that more awful gathering in the valley of Jehoshaphat described in the third. The prophet adds detail to detail; each clear, brief, distinct, a picture in itself, yet adding to the effect of the whole. *Pusey*.

The *style and thought* of Joel are strikingly characteristic, notwithstanding numerous assonances of detail with other prophets. In the first half we are under the spell of a descriptive poet or word painter, but the prophetic orator asserts himself in the second half. Language and structure are pure, flowing and artistic, but the literary excellence is not an argument for either date, but rather a difficulty in the way of his being either the first or the last of the prophetic authors. Personal traits appear in the detailed delineation of the physical aspects of the disaster, in the contrasting vagueness as to the sins that caused it, and in the predominant and all-persuading engrossment of the seer in the grand conception of the day of the Lord. *Eluslic*.

*Contents of the Book.*

There are three predictions in Joel. The first is of the plague of locusts and drought, and the removal, or reversal, of that plague, occupying chap. 1 and chap. 2 to the end of verse 27. The second is of the effusion of the Holy Spirit, typified by the refreshing rain which brought back verdure to the parched fields, contained in the last five verses of chap. 2. (These verses, according to the Hebrew arrangement, form chap. 3.) The third prediction is of the Day of Judgment, typified by the destruction wrought upon the locust scourge, and of the reign of righteousness accompanying and following the judgment. This occupies the remaining chapter. *B. C.*

*Scope of the Prophecy.* The situation pictured in the prophecy is the following. The land has been devastated by successive swarms of locusts. A still more terrible visitation is impending. In the intervening pause the prophet appears. With graphic strokes he depicts the bygone disasters, describing them as Divine judgments on the land, and urging the people to repentance (1). He proceeds to paint in still darker tints the more awful vengeance of Heaven that is approaching, and passes over

into an overpowering appeal for penitence and instant prayer to God for mercy (2: 1-17). This first intervention having proved successful, the prophet presents himself to the contrite congregation, and pours forth a comforting reassurance of God's present pity and future grace (2: 18-32), and concludes with a majestic picture of the consummation of judgment and triumphant establishment of God's kingdom on earth (3).

Of these main divisions the first falls into five sub-sections—an introduction, three special appeals, and the conclusion. A calamity of unprecedented magnitude has befallen the land. Swarm after swarm of locusts have stripped it bare (1: 2-4). The profligate and luxurious are struck by the blow, for the new wine and other means of indulgence are destroyed (1: 5-7). The religious portion of the community is also stricken, for the materials for sacrifice are cut off, and, as it were, intercourse with Heaven is severed (1: 8-10). The agricultural classes and the whole body politic are concerned, for the sources of existence are annihilated, and the withered aspect of the blasted fields spreads to men's faces, and joy is banished from their homes (1: 11, 12). It is time for the priests to unite the people in a penitential fast and universal prayer for mercy, when already famine gnaws, the seed rots in the blighted soil, pastures and streams are dried up by scorching drought, and the beasts by their distracted movements and cries of agony make appeal to Heaven for compassion (1: 13-20).

The second division describes a new invasion of locusts, more terrible in itself and in its circumstances, because more manifestly accompanied by the personal presence of the Divine Judge. The utterance falls into five sections, of which the opening one dramatically delineates the first appearance in the distance of the dreaded scourge (2: 1-3); the second, the sickening horror of their nearer approach (2: 4-6); the third, their restless onset and men's presaging despair (2: 7-11); the fourth furnishes a promise of escape to sincere repentance (2: 12-14), and the fifth completes the continuous summons to national contrition and supplication (2: 15-17).

The third division, opening with a terse historical statement, tacitly assuming that penitence has been done, and declaring God's forgiveness, proceeds to unroll a new chart of the future. The prophet had foretold the approaching doom of impenitent Israel. He must now unfold the changed character of

coming events in view of the great fact of a penitent Israel. The main elements of the programme are depicted in five sections. With repentance and restoration (1) Divine favor Israel's relation to the great elements of God's government is entirely altered. The impending judgment is withdrawn. Their present distress is relieved and passes into plenty and prosperity. In this deliverance the supreme effect of gladness is the assurance of God's presence with them and His unchanged purpose of grace and glory in them (2: 18-27). Therefore the prophecy must proceed. Temporal relief is not enough. Israel is destined for more than physical prosperity. The world's consummation is drawing on. To play their part in the grand fulfilment of history, Israel must have a holiness beyond that of the present reformation. The nation must become the perfect instrument of God, inhabited by His character, inspired by His aims, entirely consecrated to His service.

Such a new nature must be created, not by Israel's own act, but by a Divine deed, by a gift from above. The nation must be inspired by God's Spirit in every individual member. Then will the end of all things be near. With Israel's complete fitness to the Divine purpose the consummation of the world's drama must speedily follow. The outpouring of the Spirit is the precursor of judgment. The day of the Lord comes—a day of dread to evil doers, but of deliverance to all who call on God's name, and whom God calls (2: 28-32). The final act of judgment has, therefore, no menace any longer for God's people, but directs its violence against the heathen nations, who, persistently impenitent, have remained hostile to Jehovah and His people (3: 1-8). With weird colors and terrible dramatic power the destruction of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat (*Jehovah judgeth*) is depicted (3: 9-17). And the prophecy concludes with a glowing picture of the happy repose of finished judgment and mercy, in which all God's enemies are seen to be vanquished, and Israel, prosperous and conferring prosperity, is established forever and ever (3: 18-21). *Elliott*.

We see the fundamental significance of the prophecies of Joel, in his clear and precise prediction of the coming of the day of the Lord (1: 15; 2: 1, 2, 12); in the promises of Israel's future (2: 18-27; 3: 16-21); in the prediction of the effusion of the Holy Spirit (2: 28, 29). These predictions subsequent prophets take up and expand. The promises of future blessings

to God's people, in Joel, evidently refer to Messianic times. The gift of the Spirit, in its fullness, to the covenant people, is a prominent feature of the Messianic age, or of the New Covenant—a feature fully presented in the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah. The Apostle Peter saw its fulfilment in the miracle of Pentecost (Acts 2: 17). As many prophecies are germinant, that miracle may be considered the first instalment of its fulfilment. Its final accomplishment is not yet. The Holy Spirit is still poured out, reviving the Church, and convincing the world of sin. The present dispensation is that of the Spirit. Christ went away that He might send the Comforter (John 16: 7). *C. Elliott*.

Nothing is more striking in the Old Testament Scriptures than the unity that pervades them. As we read them in their historical succession, we find that each founds itself on those which went before it, and carries their contents, the principles and truths they enunciate, a little further onward. There are no cataclysms, no sudden breaks and no beginnings in the Bible; the traces of a gradual and orderly development may be found on every page. And here is an illustration and a proof—*Joel founds himself on Moses*. The earliest of the written prophets simply develops germs of thought planted by the first and greatest of the prophets, inasmuch that we cannot comprehend Joel save as we first study Moses. Joel was most truly inspired of God; but he was inspired to interpret and apply, to expand and develop principles which had long since been given by God to Moses, the man of God, and not to disclose principles which had no place in Hebrew thought before he spoke. It was "no new commandment" which he brought to the men of his generation, "but an old commandment" which they had had from the beginning. And again, it *was* a new commandment, for the threatenings and promises of the old commandment took new force and meaning from his lips, and from the events which illustrated them afresh and brought them home to every man's door. And it will help us, not only in our study of Joel, but in studying any or all of the prophets—it may even give us some glimpses into a *modus operandi* of inspiration, if we mark a little in detail what materials Joel draws from the teaching of Moses, and how he handles these materials and weaves them into new forms. (Cf. Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.) When he looked round on his own time and the facts of his time, seeking to interpret

them, to get at the Divine thought and intention in them, searching what and what manner of thing they signified, he saw the very judgments with which Moses had menaced the disobedient. All the trees and fruit of the land were consumed by locusts. The people had carried much seed out into the field and brought but little in, for the grain had rotted under the clods. They had planted vines and dressed them, but had neither gathered the grapes nor drunk the wine; olive trees were in all their borders, but they did not anoint themselves with oil. The field was laid waste, the ground lamented, the new wine was dried up, the oil languished. The husbandmen blanched over the wheat and over the barley, because the harvest of the field had perished; the vine-dresser wailed because the vine was dried up, and the fig-tree sickened, and the pomegranate, the palm, and the apple-tree withered and blackened beneath the locusts and the drought. These were the very miseries which Moses had predicted for the disobedient. How, then, could Joel, or any student and lover of Moses, fail to infer that these miseries were the consequence of disobedience? that they were judgments on the sins of the people? and yet Divine judgments, sent in mercy, to induce repentance and amendment? Kinling his lamp at the sacred fire which burned on the ancient Mosaic altar, he threw its full light on the age in which he lived, and even sent its rays streaming faintly into the darkness of the future, defining little perhaps, yet giving us hints and glimpses which will not mislead us so long as

we follow them with inquiring and faithful hearts. *S. Cox.*

Perhaps, if we look for an expression to characterize Joel, we cannot find a better than the prophet of repentance. The judgments on which he dwells are motives to repentance, showing its need. The promises which follow are also motives, showing its blessed consequences. He understood repentance to be a *spiritual* and a *personal* duty. Though he lived under a dispensation of forms and shadows, he did not rest in them, but could and did tear off the garment, to get at the spirit which it clothed. He knew God could be satisfied with nothing less than the offering of the heart; that it was vain to rend the mantle, if the breast it covered were not pierced by pungent sorrow for offences done to the Holy One; that repentance was a change of mind, a turning of the soul to God; that it was a duty which could not be performed by representation, or in the mass; but by each alone, one by one, by the children alone, and the parents alone, the bridegroom alone, and the bride alone, and the priests alone; and seeing in this the enlightened conviction of the prophet's own soul—a conviction so enlightened that it looks like an anticipation of Gospel sentiments, may we not, must we not, conceive of this son of Pethuel as a man who himself was performing the duty, whose own heart was rent, while fasting, weeping and mourning, he led the train of sorrowful suppliants to the altar of a merciful God? *Stoughton.*

## JOEL, CHAPTER I.

**1:1** THE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your  
3 days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell  
4 their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left  
hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and  
5 that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. Awake, ye drunkards, and  
weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine; for it is cut off from  
6 your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number; his  
7 teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the jaw teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my  
vine waste, and barked my fig tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; my  
8 branches thereof are made white. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the hus-  
9 band of her youth. The meal offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of  
10 the LORD; the priests, the LORD's ministers, mourn. The field is wasted, the land mourn-  
11 eth; for the corn is wasted, the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ashamed, O

ye husbandmen, howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley ; for the harvest  
 12 of the field is perished. The vine is withered, and the fig tree languisheth ; the pomegranate  
 tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field are withered ; for  
 13 joy is withered away from the sons of men. Gird yourselves with sackcloth, and lament, ye  
 priests ; howl, ye ministers of the altar ; come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my  
 God ; for the meal offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.  
 14 Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the old men and all the inhabitants of the  
 15 land unto the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord. Alas for the day ! for  
 16 the day of the Lord is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not  
 17 the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God ? The  
 seeds rot under their clouds ; the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down ; for  
 18 the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan ! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because  
 19 they have no pasture ; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O Lord, to thee do I cry :  
 for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the  
 20 trees of the field. Yea, the beasts of the field pant unto thee ; for the water brooks are dried  
 up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

**Chap. I.** A plague of locusts comes upon the land, unparalleled in its kind ; they are described (verses 6, 7), their devastations (verses 9-12, 16-20), and various classes of the people are summoned to mourning (verses 5, 8, 9, 13) and to fasting (verse 14). II. C.

**4.** He puts the four kinds of destroying things on a level. We have not to occupy ourselves with the task of distinguishing one of these kinds from another. The prophet is not describing the different species of the locust (of which there are said to be eighty or ninety), nor the different stages which may be observed in its development ; nor is he threatening several swarms of locusts ; but he crowds together a number of locust names to show that nothing shall remain undevastated by one and another, and another, and another devourer. B. C.

**5-14.** And now, having announced his theme, instead of narrating the several kinds of ruin wrought by the locusts, the prophet, like a true poet, throws *verre*, fire, dramatic force into his description by a series of appeals, each of which is a little picture in itself, to the various classes of Judah—to the lovers of the wine-cup (verses 5-7), to the nation, personified as a bride awakening to widowhood, weeping in passionate abandonment over a land despoiled, a temple forsaken by God and man (verses 8-10), to the vine-dressers and husbandmen sick at heart with wasted toils and defeated hope (verses 11, 12), and to the priests and ministers of the altar to cry unto the Lord night and day, and not only they, but the elders and all the people (verses 13, 14). *Cor.*

**7.** Successive armies of locusts come upon the land, each, according to the strong language of this description, devouring all that the next preceding had left. They appear under about ten different names, but whether

these names represent ten distinct species remains in doubt. It is important to the full impression of these chapters, that the power of these locusts for devastation should be understood. One author says : " Man can conquer the tiger and the lion ; can turn the course of mighty rivers, and chain the winds to his ear, and can play with the lightnings of heaven, but he is nothing before an army of locusts." Another says : " In some regions of the East the whole earth is at times covered with locusts for the space of several leagues, often to the depth of four, sometimes of six or seven inches. Their approach, with a noise like the rushing of a torrent, darkens the horizon, hides the light of the sun, and casts an awful gloom like that of an eclipse over the fields." Major Moore, when at Poona, had an opportunity of seeing an immense army of locusts which ravaged the Mahratta country, and was supposed to have come from Arabia. Their column extended five hundred miles, and so compact was it when on the wing, that, like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun. Pliny calls them " a scourge in the hand of an incensed Deity." Before them all verdure disappears ; the whole country puts on the appearance of being burned. Fire itself devours not so fast. Not a vestige of vegetation is left behind them. In a few hours they eat up every green thing, and consign the miserable inhabitants to inevitable famine. " The husbandmen make every effort possible to stay or turn aside these foes or destroy them ; they build fires or raise a dense smoke to withstand them, or dig trenches and fill them with water, but all to no purpose ; for the trenches are soon filled and the fires extinguished by infinite swarms succeeding one another, and forming a bed on their fields of six or seven inches in thickness.

When they die the effluvia becomes intolerable, and often has occasioned a pestilence fearfully destructive to human life." These few facts will suffice to show that the locust is one of the most terrible agents for destruction in the hands of the Almighty. H. C.

The root idea of the Hebrew word translated "locusts" is "to be numerous;" and among all the myriads of animated nature there is nothing that gives such an overwhelming idea of numbers as a swarm of young locusts leaping and tumbling over each other. The first time I saw a swarm of locusts, they looked like a blinding shower of snow. For about an hour the storm swept over us, darkening the air; but they passed clean away, leaving scarcely a straggler behind. They settled, however, on the sunny slopes of the Anti-Lebanon, where they deposited their eggs. A few months later the earth where the eggs were deposited seemed to have become instinct with life; and the whole surface began to flow, like a flood of lava, with waves of wingless locusts. I met the advancing tide as it rolled up a gently sloping plain toward a village with gardens and extensive fig plantations and vineyards. The villagers saw the danger, and thousands of them bravely resisted the invaders. Trenches were dug and filled with burning brushwood, in front of the rolling mass, and the men stood by the trenches and beat the locusts back into the flames; but the tide rolled on several inches deep, and filled the trenches till the roasting mass extinguished the fires. While the Arabs were resisting wildly at the first trench, another fiery trench was being prepared in their rear; but the young wingless locusts swept over the first and second trenches regardless of their losses, and, without pausing for an instant, they rolled over all barriers, growing in strength as they proceeded, and finally they settled down upon the gardens, devouring every green thing, and barking every tree and shrub. W. Wright.

In every stage of their existence these locusts give a most impressive view of the power of God to punish a wicked world. Look at the pioneers of the host, those flying squadrons that appear in early spring. Millions upon millions, with most fatal industry, deposit their innumerable eggs in the field, the plain, and the desert. This done, they vanish like morning mist. But in six or eight weeks the very dust seems to waken into life, and, moulded into maggots, to creep. Soon this animated earth becomes minute grasshoppers, and, creeping and jumping *all in the same gen-*

*eral direction*, they begin their destructive march. After a few days their voracious appetite falls; they become sluggish, and *fast*, like the silk-worms, for a short time. Like the silk-worms, too, they repeat this fasting *four* times before they have completed their transmutations and are accommodated with wings. In their march they devour every green thing, and with wonderful expedition. A large vineyard and garden adjoining mine was green as a meadow in the morning, but long before night it was naked and bare as a newly-ploughed field or dusty road. The noise made in marching and foraging was like that of a heavy shower on a distant forest.

The references to the habits and behavior of locusts in the Bible are very striking and accurate. Joel says, "He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white." These locusts at once strip the vines of every leaf and cluster of grapes, and of every green twig. I also saw many large fig orchards "clean bare," not a leaf remaining; and as the bark of the fig-tree is of a silvery whiteness, the whole orchards, thus rifled of their green veils, spread abroad their branches "made white" in melancholy nakedness to the burning sun. W. M. Thomson.

The last recorded visitation of the Holy Land by locusts was in the year 1866, which is thus described by an eye-witness: "The valley of Urtas was first attacked, and has now become a desolate wilderness. The olive yards of Bethlehem, Beit-Jalah and Jerusalem were next covered, until the trees became a dull red color. They are now barked white. But yesterday (June 1st) will be a day long remembered. From early morning till near sunset the locusts passed over the city in countless hosts, as though all the swarms in the world were let loose, and the whirl of their wings was as the sound of chariots. At times they appeared in the air like some great snow-drift, obscuring the sun and casting a shadow upon the earth. Men stood in the streets and looked up, and their faces gathered blackness. At intervals, those which were tired or hungry descended on the little gardens in the city, and in an incredibly short time all that was green disappeared. They ran up the walls, they sought out every blade of grass, or weed growing between the stones, and after eating to satiety, they gathered in their ranks along the ground or on the tops of the houses. It is no marvel that as Pharaoh looked at them he called them 'this death.' To day (June 2d) the locusts still

continue their work of destruction. One locust has been found near Bethlehem measuring more than five inches in length. It is covered with a hard shell and has a tail like a scorpion." B. C.

9. Those who loved the service of the Lord were specially afflicted, because they were no longer able to bring to His temple the accustomed and required offerings. H. C.

11. They must come together in the temple, the house of the Lord your God, because that was the house of prayer, and there they might hope to meet with God, because it was the place which He had chosen to put His name there; there they might hope to speed, because it was the type of Christ and His mediation. Thus they interested themselves in Solomon's prayer for the acceptance of all the requests that should be put up in or toward this house; in which their present case was particularly mentioned (1 K. 8: 37). "If there be locust if there be caterpillar," H.

15. This verse does *not* stand alone. The passage (2: 1) repeats: "For the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand;" and, of more weight still (in 2: 31) we read: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." This plainly shows that the prophet has some thought of another great and fearful, but somewhat remote, "day of the Lord," besides this in which locusts are the manifestation of His retributive vengeance. Here, then, are various allusions to a "great day of the Lord," to be explained and accounted for. Do we not find the key to their exposition in those laws of mental association which, under the awe-inspiring power of a present judgment, like this of locusts, carry the mind over to the more awful future—to the great power of Almighty God to bring forth from the storehouse of His plagues far more terrible, annihilating judgments, and which make every mind feel that God's judgments are near at hand? This law of mind is well known. The effect of any present judgment is to make all future judgments seem near. This fearful day of visitation by locusts brought fresh to the prophet's mind a sense of the awful guilt of his people, and of the certainty and nearness of God's sorer judgments. And, moreover, as he wrote *for moral impression*, and as the Divine Spirit had this main if not sole purpose, it need not surprise us that he deems it of no special importance to speak more definitely of the *time* or *manner* of these yet future visitations of judgment. Suffice it if he can impress

on the souls of wicked men the solemn thought that God's great day of judgment to *them* cannot be long delayed! Yet further, as bearing on the sense of this verse, let it be noted that the most fearful thing in any form of judgment is that it *comes from God*, and is a proof of His stern displeasure. The conscious sense of His wrath burning against us is of all things most awful. This becomes fitly the all-absorbing thought. Any form of judgment may suffice to awaken this feeling. Once awakened in a consciously guilty bosom, the man knows and feels that more and greater demonstrations of God's displeasure must be near. H. C.

"God that is holy sanctifies Himself in righteousness" (Isa. 5: 16), by sending destructive judgments upon all that opposes His purpose of redemption, and thus insuring the triumph of His kingdom. The usual designation of this final theocratic judgment is, from Joel 1: 15 and 2: 1 onward, "the day of Jehovah" (cf. Zeph. 1: 7); "the day of Jehovah's anger" (2: 3); "the great and terrible day of Jehovah" (Mal. 4: 5). It is the day on which the Lord will humble all the loftiness of man, and will alone be exalted (Isa. 2: 17; cf. 5: 16). O.

"Alas, for to-day!" the prophet cries. "Alas, for to-day! for even this day of lamentation and woe shows that the final doom draws nigh—the day that will come like a destruction from the Almighty, that will smite evil and all who cling to it with an eternal death." It was this great and final day of the Lord, ever present to the prophetic eye, which threw deep and ominous shadows on every intervening day of judgment. That the land should be parched by drought and consumed by locusts was in itself a terrible calamity; but this calamity clothed itself in new terrors when it was regarded as a portent of the last judgment. And it was in this portentous light that Joel would have the people regard it. They would miss "the sweet uses" of this adversity, unless they permitted it to quicken within them a profound sense of the moral government of God—the government which is to reach its climax at that final session in which every man will receive according to his deeds, whether they be good or whether they be bad. And at least one feature of that great day was clearly prefigured in the present judgment. The day of Jehovah would come "like a destruction on all that was evil, nay, a destruction of much that in itself was good, in order that evil might be punished and extirpated; for was not the fair teeming earth to be swept with fire? were

not the gracious heavens to be folded like a scroll, and the serviceable elements to be consumed as in a furnace, that the wickedness of the wicked might be brought to an end? That aspect of the last day, if no other, was illustrated by what was now passing before their eyes; for even now the fair face of Nature was blackened and deformed as by fire; the innocent creatures, the flocks and herds, roamed disconsolate over wasted pastures, or stood bewildered by water courses that were dried up. Food was cut off; joy and gladness were banished from the house of God. And all for what? All for 'the guilt' of man; all that men might repent their guilt, and return to Him from whom their hearts had gone astray (verses 15-20). *S. Cox.*

*"The Day of Jehovah" in Joel.*

All doctrines in regard to the millennium, the second coming of Christ, and the final judgment depend greatly on the passages in the New Testament that use the formulas, "the day of the Lord," "the day of our Lord," "that day," and the like; such passages, for example, as 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:12; Matt. 25:13, etc. The meaning of these passages is, in turn, greatly dependent on the relations that exist, both in ideas and in phraseology, between them and the texts in the Old Testament that speak of "the day of the Lord"—that is, "the day of Jehovah." As Joel presupposes the priestly laws of the Pentateuch, those who regard these laws as of post exilic origin are obliged to assign to the Book of Joel a date still later. But this opinion concerning it cannot be maintained. Its date is truly indicated by its position in the same group with Hosea and Amos, the earliest of what are commonly called the prophetic books, while other indications show that Joel is the earliest of the three.

Regarding the locusts in Joel as literal and not as a mere figure of speech for an invading army, the book is written from the point of view of a time directly following three signal calamities in Judah. A dreadful army of locusts had come and gone (1:4-9; 2:1-11), their ravages having especially affected the fruit crop (1:5, 7); this had been followed by drouth in the sowing time, causing the sown seed to rot in the soil (1:10-13, 15-20, especially verse 17); and meanwhile, foreign nations were lordling it in Judah (2:17; cf. 2:19, last clause; 2:20; 4:17 [3:17], etc.). The book represents that, in response to the prayers

at a solemn fast (actual or ideal), Jehovah promised to arrest the drouth and the crop failure, and drive out the invading northern foreigner (2:18-20); the last chapter being largely taken up with the threatened punishment of the invader and the nations that had been his accomplices.

The book may be regarded as a monograph, having "The Day of Jehovah" as its subject; considering it, first, as a day of dread to Jehovah's people, demanding repentance from them (1:2 to 2:17), and, second, as a day of blessing to Jehovah's repentant people, and of judgment to the nations (2:18 to close of book). Under the first of these heads the day of Jehovah is mentioned as follows: After presenting the locust calamity (1:4-9) and the drouth (1:10-13), the poet challenges the calling of a fasting assembly (1:14), and then a second time presents these calamities. In this second presentation he introduces what he has to say concerning the drouth thus (1:15):

"Alas for the day!  
Because the day of Jehovah is near,  
And like destruction from the Almighty it comes!  
Has not food been cut off before our eyes?"

Five verses descriptive of the drouth follow, and then (2:1-2) he thus introduces his second presentation of the locusts:

"Blow ye a trumpet in Zion,  
And raise a shout in my holy mountain;  
Let all the inhabitants of the earth tremble,  
Because the day of Jehovah cometh, because it is near!  
A day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and thick darkness!"

This is followed by the description of the locusts, extending to verse 11, and then another section, a section exhorting to repentance and prayer and fasting, and then mentioning the nations that were lordling it in Jehovah's inheritance, is introduced by the words (2:11, last clause):

"Because the day of Jehovah is great,  
And is fearful exceedingly, and who shall abide it?"

In these sentences the phrase "the day of Jehovah" occurs for the first time in the Bible. But the phrase is so used as to imply that the idea contained in it was not at that time entirely new. The representation is that the calamities which had come upon that generation were so great and so accumulated as to indicate that the day of Jehovah had arrived, or was impending. From this use of terms it follows that the idea involved in the term "the day of Jehovah" was already familiar.

Turning to the second part of the book, we



find the day of Jehovah prominent in two passages. In 2 : 18-20 we are told that Jehovah was jealous for His land, and gave a compassionate answer, promising relief, first from the crop failure, and then from the northerner. In verses 21-27 the promise of relief from the crop failure is amplified. What follows, as far as to 3 : 17, is the amplification of the promise of relief from the northerner. This begins with the familiar passage cited by Peter at the Pentecost, 2 : 28-32. The section which begins thus closes with 3 : 12-17. In these two passages, note that other time-phrases are used in connection with the day of Jehovah : "afterward," 2 : 28 ; "those days," 2 : 29 ; 3 : 1 ; "that time," 3 : 1.

The day of Jehovah in these two passages has marks of identity with the day of Jehovah in the first part of the prophecy. It is near (cf. 3 : 14 with 1 : 15 and 2 : 1). It is great and fearful (cf. 2 : 31 with 2 : 11). It is marked by strange darkness (cf. 3 : 15 ; 2 : 31 with 2 : 2). The day of Jehovah in the second part differs from that in the first part mainly in being a day when the holiness of Zion is vindicated, and those who call on Jehovah are saved.

I see no room for doubt that these utterances are connected with the history of the times when they were uttered. At the date when Hazael attacked Jerusalem, the Assyrian kings claimed that they held sway over all the countries around Judah except Damascus Syria, and that they reconquered Damascus itself a little earlier or a little later than this. Just after Hazael's attack, northern Israel threw off the yoke of Damascus, beating the Syrians in three battles. Then Amaziah of Judah overcame Edom with great slaughter. Later we find Uzziah and Jeroboam II. making conquests in every direction, the empire of Assyria being broken in all those regions, and the power of Israel re-established from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. While these events were transacting, there occurred the most marked outburst of prophecy of which we have any record, an outburst which is represented in the fact that Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah all prophesied in the reign of Uzziah. During the same period occurred the earthquake of Uzziah's time, and the famous solar eclipse of *n.c.* 763, both of them events which have left their impress on history.

With these parts of the history in my mind as specimens, I have little doubt that intelligent uninspired old men, who had devoutly listened to Joel in their youth, held that the physical and political convulsions they had

lived through were the blood and fire and smoke and quaking heaven and earth and darkened skies of Joel's day of Jehovah.

The question whether this view exhausted their conception of Joel's meaning is a different question. As we have already seen, this use of the term the day of Jehovah was the application of an idea of an older time to the events of their own time. They must have seen that although the idea fitted the current events, it was nevertheless immeasurably larger than the current events. Probably it gave them no surprise that Obadiah and Amos and Isaiah successively took up the doctrine of the day of Jehovah, and enlarged upon it. If some one had told them that in future centuries Jehovah's prophets would continue to preach concerning the day of Jehovah, great and fearful and always near at hand, this would not have struck them as unintelligible, or as inconsistent with that fulfilment of the prophecy which they themselves had witnessed.

It is not probable that Joel's uninspired contemporaries found in his words any specific prediction of any such scene as occurred when the cloven tongues descended at Jerusalem. What they found was a predictive historical description of what Jehovah was doing and was about to do in their own time, yet a description so framed that it was capable of a continually unfolding and enlarging fulfilment as ages should pass. This idea was no more difficult for them to entertain than for us ; and it is easy for us at least to note the fact that from Joel's time to Peter's, and from Peter's time to the present day, Jehovah's ministers have been preaching the doctrine of the day of Jehovah, great and terrible, always impending, making perpetual demand upon His servants for repentance and vigilance and fidelity.

Let us next see whether we can trace the idea in its earlier form.

In the thirty-second chapter of Exodus we have the account of the sin in the matter of the golden calf in the wilderness. The account says that Moses, after rebuking the people, interceded with Jehovah for them, and at last obtained this promise (Ex. 32 : 34) : "And now go, lead thou the people whither I said to thee ; behold My angel will go before thee ; and in the day of My visiting I will visit upon them their sin."

We have here the enunciation of an idea capable of being repeated and handed down from generation to generation, the idea of Jehovah's appointed day for visiting His people in

judgment for their sin. In Hebrew, the phrase is necessarily definite—"the day of Jehovah's visiting," not "a day of His visiting." While any time of national chastisement might be a day of visitation, there remained in the minds of those who were familiar with the record the conception of *the* day of visitation, supreme and alone as compared with other days.

We turn to a different form of phraseology in the earlier writings. In Num. 24 : 14 Balaam proposes to advise Balak : "What this people shall do to Thy people in the latter days." In Gen. 49 : 1, Jacob says that he will make known to his sons : "What will befall you in the latter days." In another class of passages, this phrase is used in a distinctly limited sense : "For I know, that after my death, ye will act very corruptly, and will remove from the way which I have commanded you, and the evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the eyes of Jehovah" (Deut. 31 : 29). "In the distress to thee, when all these words find thee, in the latter days, and thou shalt turn unto Jehovah thy God, . . . He will not forget the covenant of thy fathers" (Deut. 4 : 30). The time which in these two passages is called the latter days is three times called "that day," in Deut. 31 : 17, 18.

Here, then, we have the terms "the latter days," "that day," indicating not future time in general, but some point in future time that is conceived of as entirely specific and definable. This point in future time is like Jehovah's day of visitation in Exodus and the day of Jehovah in Joel, in that it is a time of punishing Jehovah's people for their sins. It is further like the day of Jehovah in the second part of Joel in that it is a time in which it appears that Jehovah is a faithful covenant God to those who turn to Him.

In fine, the statements of the Old Testament are to the effect that when Israel entered the land of promise, there was sent "before His face" (Ex. 33 : 2 ; cf. 32 : 34 ; 23 : 20, 23 : 14 : 19) Jehovah's Messenger, who led him to victory. Accompanying this peculiar grace was an awful threatening, the threat of the day of Jehovah's visiting him for his sins, in the latter days ; but the threatening was balanced by the promise that even in "that day" Jehovah would remain faithful to His covenant. In this somewhat vague form this warning and promise were handed down, until, in the mouth of Joel, they assumed the more definite character of the doctrine of the Day of Jehovah. *W. J. Beecher,*

## JOEL, CHAPTERS II., III.

2 : 1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain ; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble : for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand ;  
 2 a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn spread upon the mountains ; a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither  
 3 shall be any more after them, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them ; and behind them a flame burneth : the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and  
 4 behind them a desolate wilderness ; yea, and none hath escaped them. The appearance of  
 5 them is as the appearance of horses ; and as horsemen, so do they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that de-  
 6 voureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. At their presence the peoples  
 7 are in anguish : all faces are waxed pale. They run like mighty men ; they climb the wall like men of war ; and they march every one on his ways, and they break not their ranks.  
 8 Neither doth one thrust another ; they march every one in his path : and they burst through  
 9 the weapons, and break not off *their course*. They leap upon the city ; they run upon the  
 10 wall ; they climb up into the houses ; they enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth quaketh before them ; the heavens tremble : the sun and the moon are darkened, and the  
 11 stars withdraw their shining ; and the Lord uttereth his voice before his army : for his camp is very great ; for he is strong that executeth his word : for the day of the Lord is great and  
 12 very terrible ; and who can abide it ? Yet even now, saith the Lord, turn ye unto me with  
 13 all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning ; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God ; for he is gracious and full

- 14 of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God ?
- 15, 16 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly : gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the old men, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts : let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them : wherefore should they say among the peoples, Where is their God ?
- 18, 19 Then was the Lord jealous for his land, and had pity on his people. And the Lord answered and said unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith : and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations : but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, his forepart into the eastern sea, and his hinder part into the western sea ; and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.
- 21, 22 Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice : for the Lord hath done great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field : for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God : for he giveth you the former rain in just measure, and he causeth to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain, in the first
- 24 month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.
- 25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you : and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is none else : and my people shall never be ashamed.
- 28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions : and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered : for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as the Lord hath said, and among the remnant those
- 3 : 1 whom the Lord doth call. For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat ; and I will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. And they have cast lots for my people : and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. Yea, and what are ye to me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the regions of Philistia ? will ye render me a recompence ? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head. Forasmuch as ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things : the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the sons of the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border : behold, I will stir them up out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head ; and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the men of Sheba, to a nation far off : for the Lord hath spoken it.
- 9 Proclaim ye this among the nations ; prepare war : stir up the mighty men ; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears : let the weak say, I am strong. Haste ye, and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together : thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat : for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe : come, tread ye : for the winepress is full, the fats overflow ; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision ! for the day of the Lord

15 is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withhold their shining. And the Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be a refuge unto his people, and a strong hold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. And I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

**Chap. 2.** The great alarm is sounded forth from the temple as usual in the presence of some dire calamity (verse 1); a more full description of the locusts is given—in part personal (verses 4-9), and in part general and in the line of their effects (verses 2, 3, 10, 11); the Lord exhorts the people to return to Him (verses 12-14). A solemn assembly is called for fasting and prayer (verses 15-17); the Lord answers graciously (verses 18-20), and passes over to rich promises of mercy, including rain and abundant harvests (verses 21-27); and finally to the fuller promise of His Spirit in the latter time (verses 28, 29-32).

**1.** "Blowing the trumpet and sounding an alarm" from the temple was of Divine appointment in the law given through Moses. (See Num. 10: 1-10.) It convened the people to consider and act upon any case of general calamity, and had the promise—"Ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies." The near "coming of the day of the Lord" is analogous to chap. 1: 15, and must be explained in the same way. H. C.

*The day of the Lord.* Again the temporal visitation is represented as typical of, and completed in, the final and great judgment. The temporal visitation "cometh," takes place; the final judgment "is nigh at hand," not yet come.

**2-11.** A description of the destroyers; the previous chapter had described the land which they had destroyed. B. C.

**2.** This darkness swept on as an avalanche of cloud, and rested like a dark pall of gloom and terror on the whole land. That this visitation should be described as surpassing any ever known before, and even any that should come after for many generations, need not surprise us. It may have been strictly true of it *while it lasted*, and in reference to judgments of this sort. H. C.

The prophet repeatedly alludes to the gloom and darkness occasioned by the arrival of the locusts. In fact, they fly so closely, and in such dense masses, that the sun is obscured, and the light is reduced to that of the sun under eclipse. We remember, when sitting writing on a summer afternoon at Baghdad, to have been startled by a sudden obscuration, reducing the light to that of a cloudy or foggy day in this country. This could not be accounted for from any obvious cause under the always cloudless sky of Chaldea, and we rushed out to see what was the matter—the first impression being that there was an eclipse of the sun. It proved to be a vast and dense cloud of locusts, passing over the city, which it covered like a pall. The flight was low; and the air seemed filled with them, as with us in a heavy fall of snow. Indeed, there is nothing that will give a better idea to the English reader than this of the appearance presented and the motion observed. Only that in this case the movement was horizontal, and the flakes (formed by the body of the locusts) being opaque, seemed black between the spectator and the sun. In many parts the cloud of locusts was quite black by its thickness, which allowed not the rays of the sun to pass through; but in other parts, especially toward the outer margin, the mass was less dense, and allowed the light to penetrate. *Kitto.*

**3.** "Fire" and "flame" are probably figurative; the desolation they wrought being like that of fire on the prairies, as if fire swept on before them, and again behind them, leaving absolutely nothing more to be destroyed. Exquisitely forcible and touching is this—the land seen in all the beauty of Eden before them, but behind them only a desolate wilderness.

**4, 5.** The figure of an army moving in solid phalanx and fearful array is constantly present to the mind. Yet the thing described is an army, not of men, but of locusts. The lo-

custs are like armed horsemen. He does not say that armed horsemen are coming on, and are like locusts. II. C.

The noise of their wings and legs when they leap resembles that of the ancient war chariots bounding over the rough hill-roads; it is like the crackling of the flame as it sweeps over a field in stubble; it is like the clashing of arms with which, in antique times, military hosts used to fire themselves for battle (verse 5). They inspire a terror as universal, as abject, as that felt before a conquering and invading army; "before them the nations tremble; all faces go pal" (verse 6). *That* holds good to this day; it is with a paralyzing agony of despair that an Oriental people awaits their approach. *Cor.*

**6.** Travelling along the western coast of Africa, I once beheld this terrible infliction. A few hundred yards to our right, darkening the air, the great innumerable host came on slowly and steadily, advancing in a direct line and in a mighty moving column. At the extremity of the field I saw the husbandmen bending over their staffs, and gazing with hopeless eyes upon that host of death, which swept like a destroying angel over the land, and consigned to ruin all the prospects of the year; for wherever that column winged its flight, beneath its withering influence the golden glories of the harvest perished, and the leafy honors of the forest disappeared. There stood those ruined men, silent and motionless, overwhelmed with the magnitude of their calamity, yet conscious of their utter inability to control it. *Lord Carnarvon.*

**7-9.** A closely accurate description of locusts, as they sweep along in their onward march for devastation. Every feature is in its place, made true to the reality by a master's hand. That the sword avails nothing against them goes to confirm this view, and to shut off the possibility of applying the description to the Assyrian army. II. C.

Australian papers state that in the Riverina district the grasshoppers, or locusts, have been very troublesome recently, not only destroying crops, but filling up wells and water-tubs, and even consuming textile fabrics, such as blinds and window-curtains in the houses. *Times*, January, 1875.

**10.** Strong feeling naturally expresses itself in strong language. The darkening of the sun, moon and stars is a common figure for a great calamity; as, on the other hand, sun-rising and the joyous light of day are symbols of prosperity. The reader may find scriptural

examples in abundance—*e.g.*, of the former class, Jer. 4:28; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Isa. 13:10; Matt. 24:29. II. C.—The description is now passing on from the type to the antitype; from the terror of the locusts and temporal foes to the terrors which are to precede the last day. Yet without any violence done to the type.

**11.** *His army.* Showing that those who afflict and destroy, whether temporally or at the end of all things, are still Jehovah's executors of vengeance. In Isa. 13:3 the Medes and Persians are "His sanctified ones" for the destruction of Babylon. B. C.

**Who can abide it?** The future punishment of the wicked may be regarded as a necessary result of a sinful existence. Sin carries with it its own punishment to a certain extent, while men exist on earth; and if their existence be perpetuated in the world to come, that existence must be miserable. For the society and employments of heaven there is neither relish nor sympathy in their moral nature; and severed from God and heaven they must be, even if they had their choice. Heaven itself would be a hell to the wicked. The elements of misery are essentially and inseparably connected with sin. Divine mercy has provided a remedy, and if men reject that remedy, their doom is the result of their own conduct, and impugns not either the benevolence or the justice of God. *W. Cooke.*

**12.** Up to this point Joel's denunciation has consisted of lamentation and mourning and woe, in a pathetic strain of unbroken severity and sternness. Here the first gleam of hope and tender anticipation of better things breaks in. B. C.

**12-14.** This is the only appropriate thing to be done—the only source of hope for deliverance—to return and seek the Lord in penitence, for He is gracious and delights in mercy. Who knows but He may turn from scourging to blessing, and leave us at least so much that we can bring meat and drink offerings before Him at His temple? This moral lesson is for all time, and for all sorts of affliction and calamity befalling men in this world. Everywhere and always, be the scourge what it may, it behooves men to turn to God, confessing sin, imploring mercy, daring to hope, since they may, that the Lord will yet turn from judgment to mercy. II. C.

**12.** He that would so turn to the Lord, as to find mercy with Him, must not turn from one sin to another, or from one sect to another, or from one religion to another only; but he must turn from all his sins, from all his former

wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts, and must "turn unto the Lord with all his heart"—that is, our hearts must be wholly inclined to God, and our souls be offered up as a whole burnt-offering unto Him, without any mental reservation or hypocritical equivocation. There is no agreement between Christ and Belial, between God and sin in the same heart. *Bp. Beveridge.*

*The real meaning of judgment is mercy.* The locusts have come, inflicting so much misery, suggesting portents of such terror, only that men may turn unto the Lord with all their hearts, sincerely repenting them of the sins because of which the judgment has come. This penitence is to be shown in fasting, in tears, in mourning, in amendment. The words, "Render your hearts, and not your garments," remind them that God requires the inward grace of spiritual contrition—requires "that within which passeth show." To induce this spiritual and godly sorrow, to suggest its power with God, the prophet recalls the most solemn proclamation of the Divine nature and mercy ever made to their fathers. On Mount Sinai the Lord God had descended in cloud and storm, through a trembling heaven to a quaking earth, that He might pass before Moses, proclaiming His name, "Jehovah, Jehovah El, *merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means always leave unpunished.*" It is an echo of that voice from Sinai which sounds in verse 13:

"For He is *gracious and merciful,  
Slow to anger, and of great kindness,  
And repenteth Him of the evil.*"

If they return to Him with genuine contrition, may they not hope that He, whose very name suggests a longsuffering grace and mercy, will show His great kindness and forgive their sin. If He repents of the evils they have compelled Him to inflict, may not *they* well repent of the evils by which they have compelled Him to judge and punish? For Himself the prophet has little doubt. "Who knoweth?" he asks, and the question is equivalent to "peradventure." "Who knoweth? He may return and repent, and leave behind him a blessing," even on this visit of judgment; and such a blessing, such ample stores of corn and wine and oil, that once more there will be "offering and libation," joy and gladness, solemn services and merry feasts in the house of the Lord. *Cox.*

**13.** *Repenteth Him of the evil.* The doctrine of "God's repentance" in inflicting evil, dwelt

on so strongly and so often in Holy Scripture (Ex. 32:14; 2 Sam. 24:16; Jer. 18:8; Jonah 4:2), is not merely the result of the infirmity of human language in its application to the Divine Being. Its object is to impress upon us the personal character of God, totally distinct and differing from a law; that in this character the first quality is mercy, which displays itself immediately that obstacles are with drawn; that His threatened judgments are conditional and may be averted, as in the case of Nineveh; that the power of human repentance is boundless. "If we repent of our sins, He too repents of His threat, and the evil with which He had threatened us He does not bring upon us, and with our change of mind He too is changed." *B. C.*

**18-20.** The Lord's answer promises blessings that lie over against the previous curse. He will gloriously reverse the calamities with corresponding mercies. *H. C.*—The judgment came in mercy; for it came to revive that consciousness of the Divine presence and care and goodness, to give that sacred beauty to life, and that impressive reality to worship, without which no nation can be strong and happy and free. And so soon as the merciful purpose of the judgment was reached they were redeemed from judgment; as they returned to Him, God returned to them. The locusts were driven into the desert and the sea; copious rains replenished the fountains and caused the water-courses to overflow; the pastures grew green; the fields laughed with corn; fig-tree and vine yielded their strength; the barns grew full of grain, the vats ran over with oil and wine; and joy, a pure devout joy, returned to the sons of men. Nay, more; while their hearts were quick and tender, new and larger spiritual blessings were vouchsafed to them. The downfall of rain was but a prelude to the outpouring of the Spirit, the recovered fertility and beauty of the land were but a type of the heightened vigor and fruitfulness of that loftier phase of spiritual life to which they were to be raised; with their happier conditions there was to come a happier character, new energies, purer affections. *Cox.*

**20.** In our own times we have seen swarms of locusts covering the land of Judea, and afterward, by the mercy of God, when the wind rose, they have been driven into the front and hinder sea. And the shore of both seas being covered with heaps of dead locusts thrown out by the water, they have putrefied and become so noxious as to infect the air and produce a pestilence of men and beasts. *Jerome.*

**21, 22.** By a bold personification the "land" and the "beasts" are exhorted not to fear any more, for God will remove His fearful scourge. "The Lord will do great things," is here finely contrasted with the locusts "doing great things," as in verse 20. However great their devastations, the Lord can make His ensuing blessings far greater. He delights to set His mercies over against the mischiefs and miseries that sin brings on men, and to show in this way how exceedingly He can surpass them in the greatness and glory of His grace. H. C.

**23.** The following is a paraphrase of the whole verse: "And be glad, ye children of Zion: rejoice in the Lord your God, for according to His righteousness, He is giving you the autumn rains after your repentance: as His immediate blessing, He is sending you the rain, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and afterward, in the latter days, He will pour His Spirit upon all flesh." B. C.

**25.** *My great army.* We have here a key to the grand and beautiful description which runs through these two chapters. Every reader must be struck with the poetical and sublime manner in which the allegory is conducted. There is not a more splendid piece of poetry extant. *Abp. Newman.*

Wasted and blasted years are a fact in most human lives. Few can look back, even from the standpoint of mid-age, without being startled and humbled at the number and size of the bare spots scattered over the area of his years. And the appalling thing about this waste is not the large fragments which are struck out by sickness or by accident, without any responsibility of ours. It is the years which have been eaten up by little, scarcely appreciable agencies like a caterpillar or a cankerworm. Years which have gone, frittered away, we do not know how, and for which we have nothing whatever to show; years devoured in trifles, escaped, like subtle vapor, in musing and brooding over something we meant to do, but which we never did; years that fled, as on the wings of a hurricane, in the wild rush of dissipation, and out of which are left only the broken strains of old songs, and a few dry leaves of withered garlands. There they lie back in the past, in the sad light of a sinking sun, precious, golden spaces, teeming with possibilities of good, tracts of rich soil, on which we note the aimless traces of our idle feet, as we lounged with our eyes at the ends of the earth; lo, they are blighted and bare now, as though the army of locusts had swept over them. How late we are in learning what

grand harvests are to be reaped from husbanded minutes! We begin to economize time as the penitent spendthrift does money, only when he sees the bottom of the chest between the scanty pieces.

But we have the general, sweeping promise of God: "I will restore the eaten years." That tells us that restoration, according to a Divine ideal—quite possibly a different ideal from ours, certainly a higher ideal—is a possibility and a fact in the Divine economy. But we may go further. Some features of this process we know. For example, God turns the man entirely away from the thought and the work of literal restoration. In other words, He does not ask of him to make good, in the sense of a literal equivalent, the waste of the past. He is bidden to turn his back on the bare and wasted places. His concern is with the present and the future, not with the past. As for the problem of making good the ruin, he must leave that all with God. Whatever He may do with the faultful past, a penitent soul can only leave it in God's hands. His work now is not to make good the past, but to give himself to the development of his new life as a new creature in Christ Jesus. God believes in the possibility of a genuine repentance, and frankly accepts it. We do not and cannot know what God does with the irrevocable and the irremediable in men's evil past; but we do know that He makes those barren and blasted heritages bloom again, and bring forth thirty, sixty, and an hundred-fold. Both the Bible and Christian history are full of the grand, fruitful work of restored men, men with large tracts of blasted years behind them. God's promise of restoration to His penitent people, given by His prophet in this chapter, is no stinted or modified promise. It is as full and generous as if the years had not been blighted. He says, "I will restore. As for thee, forget the things which are behind. Run with patience the race before thee. Look unto Jesus and not unto the past. Thou shalt eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shalt praise the name of the Lord thy God that hath dealt wondrously with thee, and my people shall never be ashamed." *Vincent.*

**28-32.** Yet there is another prediction still more important—the promise of the effusion of the Spirit of God upon His people in the latter times. God's ancient Church, as well as the Christian Church, had a participation in the Spirit of God. They could not have been His people without it. His Spirit was the bond of communion, the only inward bond

which could, or can, exist between God and men in covenant with God. But in the Old Testament the graces of His Spirit were less rich and less generally bestowed. Until Christ had returned to His Father, the Comforter could not come and bestow Himself in His fullness (John 16: 7). Joel is the first to predict that He should so come—"afterward," not in the prophet's own day. *Now* God would, in answer to penitent prayer, give the natural rains which were needed to repair the injuries of the locust devastation. *Hereafter* He would rain down His Spirit in an abundance which had never before been vouchsafed. Moses had long ago uttered the ejaculation, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them" (Num. 11: 29). Joel takes up his words and predicts that this longing shall be accomplished "in the latter days." Isaiah (11: 9; 32: 15; 54: 13), Jeremiah (31: 33), Ezekiel (36: 26), Zechariah (12: 10), intimate the same truth; but it is Joel who, both from the priority and the clearness of his prediction, is in an especial manner the prophet of the manifestation of the Holy Ghost, as others were prophets of the manifestation of the Messiah. B. C.

There can be no doubt that this passage predicts the effusion of the Spirit in the Gospel sense, and particularly, though not exclusively, in Gospel times. The only designation of time given here, "afterward," in future time, was purposely left thus indefinite. The period before Christ and subsequent to Joel is not necessarily excluded; the early years of the Christian age are certainly included, as Peter shows (Acts 2: 16-21) in his citation of this passage as then having its fulfilment; nor can the yet future periods of the Gospel age be shut out. Indeed, numerous prophecies show that in the times yet future there shall be far richer manifestations of the Spirit's power than the world has yet seen. Nothing in prophecy, nothing in Peter's reference to Joel on the day of Pentecost, forbids this belief. Finally, let us notice the favor shown by the Lord to the saints of that early age, in setting before them such glimpses of the better Gospel days yet to come, and particularly such revelations of the future effusions of the Spirit. It must have ministered greatly to their faith in God and to their hope and joy in His kingdom among men. H. C.

The extent of this blessing, in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed; the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles

also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Rom. 10: 11, 12). Hitherto Divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham; none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy; but in the last days all flesh shall see the glory of God (Isa. 40: 5), and shall come to worship before Him (Isa. 66: 23). Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles, till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles (Acts 10: 44, 45), which was but a continuation of the same gift which was bestowed on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost; upon all flesh, upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined, as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. H.

The Holy Ghost is the great agent of the Gospel, who brings nigh to us its blessings, its pardons and its hopes, as He brings us to that state of mind, that repentance and faith, without which we can never receive them. Hence, in the discharge of His work, according to the promise of the Saviour, He convinces "the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." He brings truth, in its clearness and power, before the mind, and opens the mind to receive it. He sets the obligations of the truth before the view, and quickens the conscience to feel them. When the facts of the Gospel come home to the mind and heart, as great and solemn and stirring realities, the Holy Ghost is there. When conscious guilt troubles the spirit, and fear takes hold upon one, so as to force from him the anxious inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" the Spirit of God is there. When the cross of Christ, girt with its bow of promise and of hope, and yet red with the blood of atonement, meets the eye, and the soul bows and casts itself, humbled, penitent and believing, at the Redeemer's feet, the Holy Ghost is there. Thus, without His influences, we see no evil in sin, and no beauty in the cross; without His influences, we know not the remonstrances of a Gospel stirred conscience, nor the peace-speaking power of atoning blood. Conviction is His gift; repentance, faith are His gifts. His design is to bring us to the experience of the former and to the exercise of the latter, and thus to place us in that moral position where alone the blood



of Christ, in its efficacy, and the forgiveness of God, in its fulness and freeness, can possibly reach us. E. M.

All the influences which bear upon the renewed soul, the guidance, the strength, the energy, the succor, the comfort, by which the life of the believer is sustained and developed—all are ascribed alike by Paul and Peter, James and John, solely to the power of the indwelling Spirit. The power of the Holy Ghost, they affirm again and again, is put forth in the soul of every believer through life. The beautiful and effective graces, the enriching experiences, and the beneficent results of a sanctified life are attributed alone to the immediate personal inworking of the Divine Spirit in the human. The light to discern duty and the energy to perform it, the courage to dare, to do or to speak for God and the right, the determination to avoid or resist evil, the fortitude to endure trial which characterize the believer's conduct, the satisfaction, the peace, the hope, the solace and the joy which enter into his experience—all that marks the process of renewal going on day by day in the inner man is the sole product of the Spirit's might, continually exerted therein, through the truth He has revealed. B.

The dispensation of the Holy Spirit will last, and His work extend over the ages, till all which may be done by Him for human salvation will have been exhausted. The Gospel will be preached, and the missionary sent to all nations, and converts be made in all lands, and the Word of Life and the Church and its ordinances be given to all people. Ancient prophecy and revealed promise and purpose of God shall have their complete fulfilment, when also the Spirit's work shall be finished, and all that God's plan of redemption can effect for human conversion and recovery to spiritual life, under the righteously applied power of the Holy Ghost, will have been secured; and then the last things must occur in the closing of human history. We do not need to trace the course of Christian ecclesiastical history in detail up to the present time, nor attempt to settle where in the process of prophetic fulfilment our age stands. We only need to know the Holy Ghost will preside over and guide the Church, and show the things of Christ to her members, and convince the world of Christ's true Messiahship, "to the glory of the Father," till His second coming. We may well believe, from the increased missionary zeal and prayer of the Church, and the Christian enterprise of the age, and the faith and expectation of Christians, that we are near to aus-

picious events and extensive changes for good to mankind. One widespread iniquity after another is attacked and abolished, and the hope and courage of good men, notwithstanding prevalent infidelity and abounding iniquity, were never so high and strong as now. The nations of the world are to become the one kingdom of the Redeemer, and in His own time He shall come and stretch His sceptre over them. *Laurens P. Hickok.*

**30.** *And I will shew wonders in the heavens.* The prophet, having foretold in the clearest terms the general effusion of the Holy Spirit which was to characterize the Gospel dispensation, concludes this chapter with a striking description of the destruction of Jerusalem which followed soon after, and punished the Jews for their obstinate rejection of the sacred influence; speaking in terms which, as well as those of our Saviour that resemble them, have a double aspect, and refer to a primary and a final dispensation. (Cf. Matt. 24 : 29.) *Grog.*—Very great slaughter and the burning of many towns, and even of a part of Jerusalem itself, preceded the destruction of the city and the Temple, and the total subversion of the Jewish polity by the Romans. *Ap. Newcomb.*

**32.** In Rom. 10 Paul quotes what is said in Joel 2 : 32 : "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Referring to it, as the apostle does, for a formal proof of the position, that there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek in the matter of salvation, he must have considered the prophet as simply addressing the Church of God, without respect to the Jewish element, which at that time so largely entered into its composition. He must have understood the prophecy as uttered respecting the visible Church of God—no matter of what element composed, or how constituted. *P. Fairbairn.*

"The remnant whom the Lord shall call" is the Old Testament form of the doctrine of the election of grace (Rom. 9 : 27 ; 11 : 5) ; Mount Zion representing the Church of Christ, and the remnant representing the elect gathered within it. In the present passage the meaning is that salvation will be found among the dwellers in Zion and those of the exiles who have been brought back thither safe. Peter refers to these words of Joel in Acts 2 : 39, "For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call," evidently in allusion to the LXX. rendering of Joel. It would seem from this that Peter understood by "the remnant" the restored exiles, whom he regards

as types of the far-off Gentiles, who are to be brought home by the call of God. B. C.

**Chap. 3.** The chapter looks far beyond the case of those nations named, and teaches that the retribution which blighted them falls under the general law, serves to illustrate that law, and finds a place in this chapter for this reason, and not as being the leading theme. The relation of this chapter to the first and second should be noticed. The locust army, and its attendant drought and consequent famine and distress, gave occasion to prayer, fasting and penitence, and so opened the way for the signal extermination of that army, and for timely rains and superabundant harvests. These lesser gifts suggested the far greater gifts of the Spirit, the prediction of which constitutes the glory of the closing verses of the second chapter. But there remains yet another great lesson of moral truth, suggested by the extermination of the locust horde—a lesson hinted at (2: 30, 31) in the allusion to “the great and terrible day of the Lord,” but laid over for its special presentation in the third chapter—viz., the fearful and exterminating retribution which God will bring on all those nations and powers which persistently array themselves in arms against His kingdom and people. Hence this is the great theme of the chapter before us. It naturally closes with the resulting peace, prosperity and purity of the rescued and saved people of God.

**1, 2.** The first word, “For,” indicates the close connection of thought between this chapter and the preceding. The prophet had said there should be “a great and terrible day of the Lord,” so sweeping in the ruin it brings that none shall escape it but those who call upon the name of the Lord. Here, resuming this subject, he begins to give the reason, “For I will gather all nations”—i.e., for trial and retribution. “Behold!” calls special attention as to truths of momentous import. The time when is indicated next—viz., when He shall interpose to redeem His people and bring them out of all their affliction. I adopt the ideal sense of “the valley of Jehoshaphat”—meaning *any* valley—any circumstances in which Jehovah judges guilty nations. The fact that *He does judge them, and visit upon them retribution in time*, is the thing taught;—the place where, and its surroundings, are only the ideal drapery of the scene, designed to make the fact more tangible to the imagination. H. C.

Joel is looking forward to a day on which the Spirit of God will be poured out on all flesh—

to a day, therefore, which will be a day of judgment to all nations and all men, since, when the Spirit of God comes to them, they will either resist or yield to it, and according as they yield or resist will determine their fate. He wants to bring this day of the Spirit, this day of judgment, this conflict of the Spirit with the flesh, the good with the evil in man, home to the hearts of Jews—to the hearts of Jews who lived eight or nine centuries before Christ. How is he to do it? He does it, or attempts it, by using facts with which they are familiar, but by using them in a way so profound, so full of a mystical and spiritual wisdom, that, dimly at least, they did see the high meaning he put into them, and looked onward to the end of the world, the last judgment, the victory of good over evil. *Chap.*

**4.** “What are ye to Me, O Tyre?” What account do I make of you? As the context goes on to say, Will ye think to rise against My scourging hand and wreak your vengeance on Me, or on My people? Will ye retaliate on Me? If ye attempt it, very speedily and swiftly will I hurl back your retaliation upon your own heads. Of course, in this lofty strain, the Lord speaks after the manner of men, but as one conscious of infinite power to punish His foes, and fully purposed to visit on them most ample and righteous retribution. As already intimated in the introductory remarks upon this chapter, these nations—Tyre, Zidon and Philistia—are named here, not as being the only nations involved in this great judgment, but as present to the minds of the prophet and of his first readers, and as fitting illustrations, therefore, of the great truths he would impress.

**9, 10.** Having finished the digression in respect to Tyre, etc., and the form of retribution destined for them, the prophet now, speaking in behalf of the Almighty, daringly challenges the Gentile hosts to muster for the mighty conflict. The first word of the challenge, rendered “prepare” war, carries with it the idea of proclaiming war in the most solemn manner with religious rites. It is the common word for “sanctify,” and means here—make this war a sacred thing; bind yourselves to it by solemn oaths, and invoke all your gods to your help. Beating ploughshares into swords reverses the long prayed for consummation when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares. The sense is—prepare for universal war. The implements on hand might suffice for any ordinary war, but not for this; now you must needs arm every man, and hence you must convert even the tools of agriculture into weapons of

war. Let the conscription be absolutely universal. Let no invalid plead exemption; "let even the weak say, I am strong."

**11.** Then with striking beauty and force the prophet suddenly turns to the other party in the conflict: "Thither bring down Thy mighty ones, Jehovah!" How fearful is this great battle of earth now coming on! H. C.

**12.** *The valley of Jehoshaphat.* In the reign of Jehoshaphat the Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites gathered an immense army, "a great multitude," and encamped near Engedi, to the west of the Dead Sea. A great terror fell upon Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast, and after his prayer Jahaziel promised that God would fight for Israel. The Israelites marched to the head of one of the valleys leading down to Engedi, in which the allied force was encamped, but before they had reached the battle-field the enemies had turned their arms against themselves; Moab and Ammon attacked and destroyed Edom, and then each other. Jehoshaphat and his army spent three days in spoiling the slain, and on the fourth day they held an assembly in the valley and solemnly named it the valley of Berakah, or Blessing (2 Chron. 20). This occurrence took place about a hundred years before the time that we have assigned to Joel, and it is not improbable that the imagery which he here uses is derived from the tradition of this great deliverance. "The great multitude" (2 Chron. 20: 2), "the great company" (2 Chron. 20: 12), "multitudes, multitudes" (verse 14) are again gathered in the valley, for the Lord there to sit in judgment upon them. It is no longer, however, called the valley of Berakah—*i.e.*, of Blessing, but the valley of Jehoshaphat—*i.e.*, the valley of the judgment of Jehovah. The name is coined by Joel on account of its meaning, and for the purpose of recalling the historical association. There is no place so named either in the valley of the Kidron or elsewhere. B. C.

The passage assumes that this dread array of armed nations, vast as numbers without number, and girded all for bloody war, results in no war at all. Their weapons amount to nothing; they are there only for judgment—culprits before the King and Judge of the universe! They suddenly find themselves on no battle-ground, but summoned to the valley where Jehovah judges; and He comes down to take His lofty judgment throne.

**13.** Here are symbols of terrific slaughter—the sickle laying low the ripened grain, and the wine-vats full and trodden till they over-

flow with wine—which in such a connection represents human blood. Dropping all figure, the reason is given in plain language—"For their wickedness is great"—not "*the* wickedness," indefinitely, but *theirs*, the wickedness of these hostile nations.

**14.** Their vast number strikes the prophet's mind, and prompts the exclamation, "O, the multitudes! the multitudes in this valley of judgment!" The word rendered "decision" means judgment in the sense of a final verdict which decides the criminal's destiny, past all reversal. (See the usage of the original word, 1 K. 29: 40 and Isa. 10: 22.) This is "*the day of the Lord*;" it comes exceedingly near in this valley of judgment. The word "*near*" should not carry the mind onward to any other day beyond this. God is here, and His great day has come!

**15.** These figures must here take their usual sense—extreme calamity—casting the deep shades of night over all the hopes of the wicked—engulfing them in deep, impenetrable darkness. So in all languages, of every land or nation, darkness is the symbol of whatever is most fearful to rational beings.

**16.** In this strain of the boldest poetic imagery the Lord becomes a lion, and His roar shakes the heavens and the earth. (See the same figure under analogous circumstances, Jer. 25: 30; Isa. 42: 13.) These figures combined give the climax of the dreadful scene, in which blended terror and majesty, justice and wrath, encircle and gird the throne of the Almighty round about, as, with the guilty nations, the oppressors of His people, assembled before Him, He sits for judgment and final decision. Then, with inimitable beauty and force, turning to those on His right hand (may we not borrow from that other analogous scene?) he says: "But the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel." H. C.

In the judgment of the great day God's voice will then shake terribly both heaven and earth (Isa. 2: 21) yet once more (Hag. 2: 6; Heb. 12: 26). This denotes that the voice of God will in the great day speak such terror to the wicked as were enough to put even heaven and earth into a consternation. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved and burned up, then will the Lord be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel (verse 16); and then shall Jerusalem be holy (verse 17). The saints are the Israel of God, they are His people, the Church is His

Jerusalem, they are in covenant and communion with Him; now in the great day their longings shall be satisfied. The Lord will be the hope of His people. As He always was the founder and foundation of their hopes, so He then will be the crown of their hopes. He will be the harbor of His people (so the word is), their receptacle, refuge and home. The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall go to be forever at home with God, to their Father's house, the house not made with hands. II.

**13-21.** The heavens above the countless multitudes, who surge and contend in the valley of Doom, darken beneath the frown of Jehovah; the hills which enclose the valley echo with the thunder of His indignation:

"Sun and moon turn dark,  
And the stars refuse to shine;  
For Jehovah thundereth out of Zion,  
And uttereth His voice from Jerusalem,  
And heaven and earth quake!"

We cannot doubt what scene it is that thus shakes the prophet. It is no wasting calamity, it is no bloody conflict, in the annals of a single race. It is the august and most terrible scene in which the great tragedy of Time is to culminate. It is the final catastrophe in the history of the world (verses 13-16).

The scene which follows it (verses 17-21) lies beyond the coasts and bounds of time. To the terrors of judgment, to the quaking heaven and earth, there succeeds the kingdom that cannot be shaken, the fruitful and peaceful splendors of the new heaven and the new earth, though even these are shadowed forth in the historic forms of time. The Lord, who thunders wrathfully against the wicked, is "a refuge for His people" in that great and terrible day, "a stronghold for the sons of Israel." And that day, darkened by storms of fate, ushers in an era of concord, abundance, joy. God dwells with His people. Zion becomes a holy mountain, Jerusalem a sanctuary, no more profaned by alien and unrighteous feet. The mountains, often so barren, drop with new wine; the hills flow with milk; "all the water-courses," now so often dry, run forever with pure living water. Nay, a fountain springs up in the house of the Lord, which flows down the barren "Valley of Acacias"—the valley

trending down from Jerusalem to the Salt Sea, the valley in which heretofore only the sand-loving acacia could thrive—causing it to take fertility again. Egypt and Edom—Egypt, the open enemy of Israel; and Edom, the false, treacherous kinsman of Israel—these two, the symbols of all that exalts itself against God, are smitten with an eternal barrenness and desolation for the sins they have committed against the chosen people; while Judah and Jerusalem, the *Divine* kingdom and the *holy* city, abide forever, God purging from them all taints of evil not hitherto removed, that He may dwell in them through all generations.

Our best comment on this passage is John's vision of the new heaven and the new earth. As the rapt apostle gazed into futurity, looking for "the end of the Lord," he saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. A river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeded out of the throne of God, and "ran forth from the house of Jehovah;" and on either side of the river grew the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, and yielding its fruit every month. He saw the city which had the glory of God, and could never be moved, into which nothing could enter that defiled. And as he gazed he heard a great voice from the throne proclaiming, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and He shall be God with them, their God."

In fine, the closing chapter of Joel's prophecy is a brief apocalypse, cast in the forms of Hebrew thought and story indeed, and only dimly bodied out, yet setting forth, in language which even the Jews could not and did not mistake, the terrors of the last judgment, the issue of the time-long struggle of good with evil, and the golden age of peace and fruitful service which is to succeed to the conflicts and storms of time. *Cor.*

Thus ends this grand, sublime and glorious chapter! We might fitly apply these epithets to the whole book, for few more sublime compositions can anywhere be found, distinguished for conceptions so lofty, a style so pure, truths so vast, so far reaching, so vital to the moral government of God over nations, and so fraught with instruction to mankind. H. C.

## PROPHECY OF AMOS.

## AMOS, INTRODUCTION; CHAPTERS I., II.

**1 : 1** THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

**2** And he said, The Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

**3** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron; but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben hadad. And I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the valley of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord.

**6** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Gaza, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole people, to deliver them up to Edom: but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour the palaces thereof: and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn mine hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.

**9** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Tyre, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole people to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant; but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

**11** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: but I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

**13** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border: but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind: and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the Lord.

**2 : 1** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Moab, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime: but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet: and I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord.

**4** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Judah, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after the which their fathers did walk: but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

**6** Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes: that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined. Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he

was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. 10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, 11 to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. 12 But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not. Behold, I will press *you* in your place, as a cart presseth that is full of sheaves. 14 And flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither 15 shall the mighty deliver himself: neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver *himself*: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself: and he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord.

INTRODUCTION. During the reign of Joash, Jonah had predicted the great successes of Jeroboam II., the son of Joash. And the prediction was fully accomplished in the forty-one years of Jeroboam's reign. It was in the latter part of this reign that the prophets Amos and Hosea uttered and recorded their predictions of the final overthrow of the kingdom of Israel. Amos was (as he tells us) a simple herdsman and gatherer of wild figs, whose home was in Tekoa, a village twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Though a citizen of the kingdom of Judah, he went under a Divine impulse into the adjoining kingdom of Israel. It was mainly at Bethel, the chief seat of the calf-worship introduced by the first Jeroboam, that he uttered the prophecies of Israel's downfall and ruin comprised in this book. B.

Bethel was about the same distance to the north of Jerusalem that Tekoa was to the south, and in a single day the shepherd of the wilderness might traverse the twenty-four miles that separated him from the chief scene of his mission. He says that his prophetic vision was granted to him in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. His words indicate the time when those two kings were contemporary—i.e., from B.C. 809-784. His mention (6 : 14) of the entering in of Hemoth as the northern border of Israel, implies that he prophesied after its recovery by Jeroboam (2 K. 14 : 28). Besides this, there does not appear to be any limitation of time. B. C.

His ministry was exercised in the reign of Jeroboam II., the son of Joash (Amos 1 : 1). He was an able but ungodly monarch. He adhered to the worship of the golden calves, but administered the affairs of the kingdom with great wisdom and energy in both its domestic and its foreign relations, so that good order and prosperity prevailed within, and the boundaries of Israel were enlarged to the same limit northward as in the time of Solomon

(2 K. 14 : 25, 27; cf. 1 K. 8 : 65). It had been promised to Jehu that his sons to the fourth generation should sit upon the throne of Israel (2 K. 10 : 30). Jeroboam II. was the third in this line of descent, and was succeeded by his son Zechariah, who was assassinated by the usurper Shallum after a reign of six months (2 K. 15 : 8, 10). After this there was an almost unbroken series of assassinations and usurpations until the kingdom was finally overthrown and the people carried away captive by the king of Assyria. W. H. G.

His pursuits had been pastoral. He had been among the shepherds of Tekoa. Much of the imagery of his prophecies arose out of that circumstance. He alludes to the height of the cedars and the strength of the oaks, to the snaring of birds and the roaring of the lion, to the sifting of corn and the treading of grapes, to the constellations of the heavens and the changes of morning and evening—natural objects which had been familiar to him, as he tended his sheep by day, or watched over his flocks by night. We see, too, in him, as in Joel and other prophets, an intense sympathy with the beautiful and magnificent in nature, while throughout his discourses he breathes that strong faith in Jehovah, as the personal Creator and sustainer of all things, which distinguishes the Hebrew from the Gentile sage or poet.

Amos was a man who distinctly saw God in all the events of human history, as well as in all the scenes of the material universe, having that conviction of His personal and everlasting presence which should be cherished by us as we study the annals of the world, leading us to paint over every picture of the past and present a hand which the ungodly cannot, will not see. "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in the city?"—a misfortune as men call it—"and the Lord hath not done it?" Like Joel, too, he saw God as a moral governor, employing natural agencies for the punishment

of sin. With a deep sympathy in the justice of the Almighty, on whomsoever His rod might fall, he calmly follows and records the sweep of the Divine indignation, from Damascus to Gaza—from Tyre to Edom—from Ammon to Moab; noting down the three transgressions and four for which the judgment came, till the circle narrows, and the wings of retribution overshadow the very centre, where the prophet himself is standing; and for the three transgressions and four of Judah and Israel, he declares that a fire shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem; while the most courageous of the Israelites "shall flee away naked in that day," saith the Lord." *Stoughton*.

It must also be noticed that Amos abounds in terms, idioms and ritual allusions which prove great familiarity with the Books of Moses, and imply it on the part of those whom he addressed. And as he has employed in his writings the words that are found in the earlier books, so later prophets have incorporated several of his expressions in their works. B. C.

Commissioned especially to rebuke the sins of Israel, he yet in the first and second chapters denounces judgments on six other contiguous powers outside of Judah and Israel, and then upon these two in like general terms. Then in chaps. 3-6 he exposes and reproves in detail the sins of Israel, and threatens judgments therefor. The last three chapters differ from this middle portion by the introduction of visions for purposes of more vivid illustration, and by the blending of promise with the general strain of threatening. The book closes with predictions of peace and prosperity to the kingdom of God on earth. II. C.

*Genuineness and Unity of the Book.* The book, as it left the prophet's hands, is an orderly planned and perfect whole. Beyond one or two possible omissions (4: 3), or transpositions (5: 7 to follow 9), the genuineness and unity of the book are almost beyond question. It is in the interest of a theory rather than on sufficient grounds of fact, that a few sections are asserted to be interpolations—viz., 4: 13; 5: 8, 9; 9: 5, 6, and sometimes 6: 2. The plan of the book is well defined. Amos's message is predominantly one of doom. His duty is to denounce Divine judgment on Israel's incurable depravity. He proclaims nothing less than the downfall of the throne, the exile of the people and the dissolution of the State.

The book consists of three sections. In the first (1, 2) there is a general announcement of approaching destruction as a punishment of sin. The second section (3-6) expands and re-

iterates the indictment and the menace. The third (7-9) is a dramatic enforcement and summing-up of the impending doom, passing over into promise for the future. These larger divisions fall easily into smaller subdivisions, and a regular progression of thought may with some degree of confidence be traced through them. The first (1, 2) has the character of a prelude. The seer has heard the roar of approaching judgment. He sees towering on the northern horizon the black thunderstorm of Assyrian invasion. Already, as in the lurid light that preludes a storm, the fair face of Canaan seems to grow pallid and withered (1: 2). Slowly the lightning-laden cloud rolls over the whole circle of Palestinian States, striking with destruction now one, now another (1: 3-2: 3), till at the seventh its fires fall on Judah (2: 4, 5), and then concentrate their condensed and prolonged terrors upon Israel (2: 6-15). It is usually held that the sins for which the nations are to be punished are violations of humanity, but it is more consistent to think that, as in the case of Judah and Israel, the common cause of judgment is thwarting God's will in His gracious government of mankind.

The next great division (3-6) consists of five parts, marked by similar headings and order of thought. The first emphasizes the certainty of judgment. As surely as effect follows cause and proves its existence, the prophet's mission argues God in motion for judgment, the Divine anger postulates sin in Israel, and sin must bring ruin (3: 1-4: 3). Next we have the hopelessness of more moderate chastisements producing an adequate repentance (4: 4-13). Then, as a natural sequel, follows an impassioned exposure of the ineradicable fixedness of their religious and social declension (5: 1-18), which, in the two closing sections, expands into a woe pronounced, first, on their religious debasement (5: 18-27), and, second, on their moral corruption (6: 1-14).

The last large division (7-9) is framed upon five visions, devised to depict powerfully the dark destiny of the nation. We have, first, destruction by locusts; second, by fire; third, the wall condemned upon application of the plumb line (7: 1-9). At this point occurs the interruption of the alteration with the priest Amaziah (7: 10-17). Resuming, the prophet pictures under the symbol of ripe fruit the nation's readiness for destruction, and works out the thought at some length (8: 1-14). Finally he presents God standing over the altar in the sinful temple, hurling it in ruins on the herds

of the worshippers, pursuing to his death the last one of the fugitives, and making an end of old impenitent Israel (9 : 1-10). But with accomplished judgment comes the recoil of recollection, and the prophet proceeds to show how the sifting of Israel among the nations will end in restoration. Once more the ideal Davidic rule and empire shall be established, and in more than earthly prosperity and permanence God's people shall possess God's land and be God's kingdom on earth (9 : 11-15).

*Literary Qualities.* The literary merits of the production must be rated very high. The general information of the writer is comprehensive and minute. He can paint in detail the religious customs, the social conditions, the local circumstances and vicissitudes of every part of the northern kingdom. With the geography and history, the alliances and feuds, trade relations, national institutions, and aspirations of the neighboring nations, he is thoroughly familiar. He is possessed of profound ideas about nature, providence, the movements of races and their place and function in the world's government.

For breadth of survey, for strength and massiveness of conception, alike in morals and in religion, he is not surpassed by any of the prophets. He is a poet, an orator, a philosopher, and a statesman. But in those days and in his social environment, he might be all this without being a man of books and cities. Native genius, interest in the traditions of his people, intercourse with passing caravans, personal visits to distant parts, and a spirit awake to the presence and working of God in human history, past, present and future—these were influences potent enough to educate the man, and admirably adapted to prepare the way for the prophet.

His style is terse, dramatic and simple, but very pointed and forcible. He loves brief, uninvolved sentences, though occasionally carried away into passionate appeal or lyrical outbursts of poetic delineation. He indulges much in question, apostrophe and exclamation. He is an orator more than an artist or a bard. With all his simplicity we find traces of paranomasia, rhythmic arrangement and rhetorical construction. His exposition abounds in rich and varied imagery derived from nature, and striking illustrations taken from every-day life. The ordered arrangement, compact style and general literary finish of his book suggest slow, careful and leisurely construction, while the fire of its invective, the impetus of its appeals and the terrible directness of its denunciation

prove it the record and embodiment of speech originally orally delivered.

*The Prophet's Teaching.* The teaching of Amos is a matter-of-fact protest against definite sins and errors, and a practical preparation to secure the triumph of religion in impending strains and changes. Israel, intoxicated by success, and lured by the flesh, had forsaken the true Jehovah. The god of the calf-worship was a physical and carnal deity, pleased with a sensual service, pacified by sacrifices, careless of justice and truth and mercy. The life of the nation may be eaten out by oppression, and corruption, and luxury, and lust, but Israel is Jehovah's people, and—so they argued—He will not for personal pride permit them to suffer loss, but the day of their need will be the day of His gracious and triumphant intervention. This blind superstition was destined speedily to be shattered by the overwhelming avalanche of Assyrian invasion. If faith was to survive, then the lesson of Providence must be interpreted beforehand and set in its true light.

This was the mission of Amos and of the prophets that followed him. Jehovah was not the God the people fancied Him. Sacrifices and incense are nothing to Him whose throne is the universe. Jehovah is a God of mercy and righteousness. With this corrupt Israel He is not pleased, but displeased. Them indeed He chose out of all the nations of the earth to be His people. But, therefore, He will not favor them. He will the more sternly punish their sins. His day of visitation is at hand, but for unrighteous Israel it will be a day, not of deliverance, but of vengeance. He has already gathered the fires of His fury together, and is about to launch them on the States of Palestine, and to execute just retribution on His guilty people. These were startling and creative conceptions, whose value in the growth of revelation was immense. For a national and fleshly notion of the covenant tie between God and Israel his teaching substituted an ethical and religious. In place of a merely natural explanation of the world's course, it presented the sublime thought of a righteous government and guidance of human history. Beyond all else, it set forth the ethical nature of the Creator and Ruler of the world in unapproachable majesty and might. In the words of a very helpful writer : " Morality is that for the sake of which all things exist ; it is the alone essential thing in the world. It is no postulate, no idea, but at once a necessity and a fact, the most intensely living of personal powers—



Jehovah the God of hosts." That is a great lesson, and one that religion is too apt to forget.

On the surface Amos may seem to make too much of mere morality, but it is only an appearance. With him, to do right is to serve God, and the motive must be the love of God and of our neighbor. The central note of his prophecy rings like a prelude of the great definition of the apostle: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." *Elmslie*.

**Chap. I.** After a very brief introduction, which gives us the name of the author and the date of his prophecies, the chapter proceeds at once to name the crowning sin of five adjacent nations, and to announce the judgments of God upon them. They are Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom and Ammon. His main object in this is to make the stronger impression upon Israel. If for their sins God must scourge and even exterminate heathen powers sitting in the dimness of the light of nature, how much more must He for your sins scourge you to whom His Word has come! H. C.

**1.** *The words of Amos.* The prophets do not all use the same formula as the preface of their message. Frequently it is *The word of the Lord came*. The opening of Jeremiah is exactly the same as we find here—*The words of Jeremiah*. In each case the context shows that the words of the prophet were not his own, strictly speaking, but had a Divine origin. Here Amos says that he *saw* these words, and the verb which he uses is limited to prophetic vision. What he utters, therefore, was not revealed to him by *flash and blood*, but by the God of Israel. B. C.

How natural does it now seem that Amos, living at Tekoah, should have been a "herdman"! For Tekoah is situated just within the edge of the great wilderness, and most of its people would be herdsmen and shepherds—the region being adapted only to pasturage—like as David, though living at Bethlehem, the fruitful, still, since Bethlehem was near the wilderness, kept his father's flocks, and carried them into the pastures of such desert-wilds as were the haunt of lions and bears. *Bart*.

"Two years before the earthquake," in King Uzziah's reign; a visitation which struck such terror into the hearts of the people that Zechariah (chap. 14:5) still dwells upon it even after the return from Babylon. But well known as it was then, there is nothing to settle

its date now. All we know is that it happened while Jeroboam II. was still alive, and at the height of his glory, and probably, therefore, during the first twenty years of Uzziah's reign. R. P. S.

**2.** The original word "roar" is used commonly of the lion, and denotes here that the Lord has aroused Himself like the lion of the forest, to assert His rule among the nations, and especially to visit retribution on those which had filled up the measure of their sins. The last half of the verse is characteristic of Amos. A man who came up among herdsmen would naturally think of these rather than other effects of the Lord's sore judgments. Carmel was ordinarily clothed with verdure even to its summit; hence the fitness of saying "the top of Carmel shall wither." This mountain lay in the northwest part of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. The word Carmel means a fruitful field, a fact which makes this allusion the more forcible.

**3.** In the passage commencing here and extending to chap. 2:6, eight kingdoms are brought up in succession, with Judah and Israel last. Each receives its message, beginning, "Thus saith the Lord;" in each is the phraseology—"For three transgressions, and for four, I will not reverse it;" each specifies the last and most heinous crime, for which, especially (it would seem), the judgment named is sent; and each closes with naming the judgment. This remarkable uniformity in style no doubt had its object. It naturally implied that the same God of nations was taking them all successively in hand to administer justice and judgment upon each and on the same principles, common to all. It was well adapted to confirm the impression that Jehovah is indeed the ruler of nations, and holds them to a solemn responsibility, *here in time*, to bear themselves justly and not oppressively toward each other. Moreover, as already intimated, these nations contiguous to Judah and Israel are mentioned first, to prepare the minds of the men of Judah and Israel to hear their own sin and doom—first to stir up their sense of justice and draw out their approval of God's righteous ways, and then to say to them, "Thou art the man!" "Damascus" represents Syria, a strong and flourishing kingdom on the north and northeast of Israel. It was the capital. Their last sin was that of "threshing Gilead"—putting its inhabitants to torture and death under the huge threshing-wain, armed with savage iron teeth, and drawn by animals over the grain.

**4, 5.** The judgment was a devouring fire sent on the royal house of Hazael, and of his son and successor, Ben-hadad. (Both his father and his son bore this name, Ben-hadad; but Amos must allude to the son. See 2 K. 13: 3, 24.) Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, fulfilled this prediction. He took the people into captivity to Kir, the river and region known as Cyrus, in Iberia. (See this fact in history, 2 K. 16: 9.) "The king of Assyria went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin."

**6-8.** Gaza, the northern of the five chief cities of the Philistines, represents here the whole cluster. Gath, the only one of the five not named here, is omitted, probably because it was already laid waste—*i.e.*, during the reign of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26: 6, 7). This was within the personal knowledge of Amos. Their crowning sin was that they carried the entire body of their captives to Edom and sold them for slaves.

**9, 10.** Tyre suffered fearfully from the arms of both Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great. They were the fire of Jehovah's vengeance upon her, specially for her sin of selling all her captives into the horrible slave marts of Edom.

**11, 12.** Edom himself comes next—an ancient kingdom southeast from Palestine, strong in arms, and very considerably advanced in culture at the time when Israel, forbidden by him to travel through his territory, journeyed round it to reach the Jordan and pass into Canaan, B.C. 1451. His crowning sin lay in his animosity against his brother Jacob. Intensely jealous of the greatness of the Hebrew nation, Edom had almost never neglected any opportunity to let loose his wrath upon them. As stated here, he had "pursued his brother with the sword," and had "cast off all pity." The original more precisely says he "*corrupted*," in the sense of suppressing and smothering the natural dictates of sympathy and compassion. "His anger did *tear*"—the common word used when savage beasts of prey tear in pieces their victims, and he "kept his wrath forever," not suffering even the lapse of time to abate its ferocity. Teman and Bozrah were principal cities in Edom, and here represent the nation. II. C.

**11. Pursued him with the sword.** We have instances enough of their aggressive warfare recorded in the historical books; but the prophet's words imply many more. The language of Jehoshaphat's prayer shows what had been the temper of Edom and Israel respectively. "The children of Ammon and

Moab and Mount Seir, whom Thou wouldst not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, they reward us, to come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit" (2 Chron. 20: 10, 11). Edom's sin and punishment are the burden of Obadiah's prophecy. B. C.

**13-15.** Ammon and Moab, nations taking their name and descent from the two sons of Lot, were ancient kingdoms on the east of Jordan, and of course contiguous to the country of the two and a half tribes here called Gilcad. The last and fatal sin of Ammon was their horrid cruelty upon the pregnant mothers of Gilcad, as if it were their purpose to exterminate not only the living population, but the unborn no less. God holds nations solemnly responsible for the sin of cruelty. It was an insignificant apology for such cruelty that they wanted more territory. The indignation of the Lord against them for such cruelty stands out in the grouping of fire, the war-cry of battle, the tempest and whirlwind, among the figures that set forth the vengeance due and about to fall on Ammon. Oh, how sublimely grand is such vengeance on a nation guilty of such horrid sin! Let us not fail to note the solemn lesson, which all people of every age should learn from this recital of Jehovah's judgments on nations for violating the plain dictates of common justice and humanity.

**Chap. 2.** This chapter continues the unfinished series of kingdoms doomed for their national sins—Moab, the last outside of the chosen people; then Judah and Israel. Israel once reached, becomes the subject of rebuke, expostulation, and threatened doom throughout this chapter and the four next following. II. C.

**4. Judah.** The other nations had *sinned without law*; they had violated the dictates of conscience. Edom had been pitiless, Moab impious toward the dead. But Judah knew God, as the Lord, a covenant God. They had His written *law*, the revelation of His will, and despised it. In the *law* and *commandments* of God they possessed the truth. They forsook this for *lies*, idols, images of false gods, and this from very early times. *Their fathers had walked after*—had worshipped these. They preferred Baal-peor, and Baalim and Ashtaroth, to the true God that brought them out of Egypt, who daily fed, guarded and guided them. The *lies* that they loved deceived them, and their descendants were led astray by their example.

**5. I will send a fire.** This prediction was lit-

erally fulfilled. (See 2 K. 25 : 9.) It is repeated by Jeremiah (17 : 27).

**6. *Israel.*** The prophet having threatened the neighboring nations and Judah for their sins, now addresses the kingdom of *Israel*, and dilates upon their transgressions. Four kinds are enumerated : injustice, hardness of heart toward the poor, incest, luxury combined with idolatry. B. C.

**6-8.** Last of all is *Israel*, the northern kingdom, to whom especially the prophet Amos was sent. It is remarkable that their chief sins, as here developed, lay in the line of immoralities against their fellow-men ; the violation of natural rights, the oppression of the poor and dishonoring the law of chastity. This Book of Amos discloses startling facts in respect to the luxury of the wealthy, and their oppression of the poor. "They sold the righteous for silver ;" good men, bearing God's image, and beloved of him for their moral integrity, they sold for paltry silver ! They "sold the poor for a pair of shoe," so cheap did they hold personal liberty and the rights of manhood ! II. C.

The particular sins for which the Israelites are threatened with punishment were their notorious cruelty and oppression in the corrupt administration of justice ; their covetousness, in perverting justice for the most paltry recompense ; their licentious and incestuous commerce. *Danavi*.

**9. *And I—I destroyed the Amorite.*** This is the preface to an enumeration of the signal favors conferred upon *Israel*, requited by the transgressions just mentioned. The *Amorite*, as being the most powerful of the Canaanite nations, stood for all. So in the next verse Canaan is called the *land of the Amorite*. Thus in Egyptian inscriptions of early date. In the narrowest sense the name belongs to the dwellers on the mountainous country west of the Dead Sea. Two emblems are used to represent the majestic bearing of the Amorite, as well as his strength—the *cedar* and the *oak*. The name for the latter in Hebrew is expressive of strength. The prophet Ezekiel (31) represents the glory of Assyria under imagery supplied by the *cedar*. And often elsewhere the same tree is the favorite symbol of stateliness and dignity. The Israelites in their own estimation were as *grasshoppers* (Num. 13 : 33). It was not then by their own strength that they

prevailed. It was God Himself who hewed down their gigantic foes, and *destroyed* them root and branch. B. C.

**11.** The order of prophets seems not to have been specially provided for in the Mosai- institutes, but sprang up under the law of demand—the exigencies of later times. For the order of Nazarites, however, special provision was made. (See Num. 6.) The persons composing this order were often set apart from their birth—*e.g.*, Samson and Samuel. They were to abstain sacredly and specially from wine and from everything else that could intoxicate, standing as living witnesses to the value of temperance and a perpetual protest against self-indulgence. It was truly a favor to the people that the Lord took His prophets and Nazarites from their own sons.

**12.** "Ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink," seducing them into the violation of their vows, and thus paralyzing their influence. "Ye forbid the prophets to prophesy." In some cases they persecuted, imprisoned and murdered God's prophets, to suppress their testimony. Such a people must be fast filling up the measure of their iniquities. II. C.

**13.** Its meaning may be conveyed by, *I feel pressed or straitened*. In the wilderness the Almighty appeared to His people, saying, "Thou hast seen how the Lord thy God bare thee as a man doth bear his son" (Deut. 1 : 31). With the like condescension He here speaks : *Behold, I, even I, feel the pressure of your sins, as the cart that is full of sheaves (full as it can hold is the meaning of the idiom) feels its heavy load*. Similar is the language used by God in Isaiah, "Thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities" (43 : 24 ; cf. 1 : 14 ; 7 : 13 ; Mal. 2 : 17). B. C.

**14.** *Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift*, etc. That is, God shall render ineffectual all their resources and methods of escape ; whether they be natural, as swiftness of foot and strength of body, or acquired by industry, diligence and wit, as power and authority among others, skill in battle, or riches and horses trained for war. Hence appears the vanity of all human devices set up in opposition to the judgments of God. Nothing but God's mercy can deliver us from His justice ; and that mercy is to be obtained only by true repentance through the promises of God in Christ Jesus. *Danavi*.

## AMOS, CHAPTERS III. IV.

**3:1** HEAR this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities. 3, 4 Shall two walk together, except they have agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all? Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city, and the LORD hath not done it? Surely the LORD God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. 8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the LORD God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

9 Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppressions in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. Therefore thus saith the LORD God: An adversary *there shall be*, even round about the land: and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. Thus saith the LORD: As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear: so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed. Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the LORD God, the God of hosts. 14 For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

**4:1** Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink. 2 The LORD God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish hooks. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her; and ye shall cast *yourselves* into Harmon, saith the LORD.

4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, *and* multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes every three days; and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings and publish them: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the LORD God. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees hath the palmerworm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. I have overthrown *some* among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name.

**Chap. 3.** This chapter continues the same strain, exposing the sins of the people, showing that the Almighty awakes to judgment against them, and calls His prophet to reveal the fearful truth. Foreign nations are summoned to witness the sins of Samaria, and again her doom is announced. II. C.

2. Israel's sins were not like those of other nations. They were sins against light and love. Mercy, favor and instruction had been lavished upon them. Thus they had more to answer for, their guilt was greater. *Therefore* He who chose them would *punish* them. But however severe the punishment, God *visited* His people in love. He did not cast them off. Chastisement was a token of His love. He would not let them be as others who knew Him not. By judgments, by warnings, by threats He would bring them back to Himself; and if they did not return to Him, it would be only because they would not.

3-8. The key to these short parables that follow is in the words of verses 7, 8. No prophet speaks his own words, utters his own thoughts, expresses his own fears and forebodings. He has been admitted to share some of the *secret* counsels of God (verse 7), whose *secret* he is. And he may not; nay, he cannot conceal what has been *revealed* to him. He must *prophesy*. Whether, therefore, Israel would listen or not, Amos has a message from God to deliver, he must give warning of impending judgments. And he explains the *necessity* that is *laid upon him* by illustrations drawn from ordinary life, all of which show that where there is a cause we look for an effect, and where we observe an effect we are sure that there must be a cause. Further, all the images employed except the first are such as fill the mind with alarm.

3. *Two walk together?* Does not their walking together necessarily imply that they previously *agreed* upon time and place of meeting, and that they have a common object in view? The question, if taken in connection with the previous verses, would suggest the thought of Israel's stubborn refusal to *walk* in the ways of God, and it might remind them of the language used in the law, "If ye will not be reformed by Me, but will walk contrary unto Me; then will I also walk contrary unto you" (Lev. 26: 23, 24). B. C.

"While you continue to walk contrary to God, you can look for no other than that He should walk contrary to you." We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to Him.

God and man cannot walk together, except they be agreed; unless we agree with God in our end, which is His glory, we cannot walk with Him by the way. II.

3-6. I paraphrase thus. Can God and Israel walk together unless agreed in sympathy of purpose and character, as they are not now? Will the Lord roar out of Zion in premonitory foreshadowings of coming vengeance, when there is no prey to fall upon? Can the people fall under war and captivity where no war is, and no captivity, and there is no wrath of God to fear? Are these threatened judgments really nothing? Are not people wont to be afraid when they hear the clarion blast of war? And shall they not fear as much now, before the awful blast of Jehovah's trumpet, calling out the nations to bring war on his land? Shall we not recognize God's agency as including and working all the inflictions of calamity that fall on guilty cities? This "evil in the city" which verse 6 assumes that the Lord has done must be calamity, not sin. The strain of the whole passage is of natural evil—the judgments about to come from God on apostate and guilty Israel. To construe this evil, therefore, as being sin, and not calamity, is to ignore the whole current of thought, and to outrage the soundest, most vital laws of interpretation. Moreover, common justice toward God forbids this construction—"Shall there be *sin* in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" This would assume that God is the doer of *all the sin in our world!* II. C.

5. *Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is?* As birds are not caught without the net of the fowler being already set and laid, and as the fowler doth not take up his nets before he has secured a prey, so neither doth God threaten these things without being prepared to execute His judgments, nor will He withdraw His hand, but will punish you except ye repent.

6. By the "evil" here spoken of is not to be understood *sin* or the evil of guiltiness, but *affliction* or *trouble*, or the evil of punishment; for God is not either the author or the cause of our sin, but we ourselves (cf. James 1: 13, 14; Hos. 13: 9). *Danvers*.

Let them know that all their troubles came from the hand of God's providence, and from the counsel of His will; verse 6, Shall there be evil in a city, in a family, in a nation, and the Lord has not done it, appointed it and performed what He appointed? The evil of sin is from ourselves, it is our own doing; but the evil of trouble, personal or public, is from God,

and is His doing ; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent. Out of His mouth both evil and good proceed. II.

7. "*Shall I hide from Abraham.*" God says to Himself, "shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" When it is God's purpose to accomplish here below a consecutive work, must He not of necessity, unless He is to work an infinite series of miracles, associate with Himself a certain number of free agents, who shall co operate with Him? For that end He must first draw them to Himself; then, in order that they may work intelligently and freely, He must initiate them into His plan, so far at least as they are to participate in its fulfilment; which presupposes one or more acts of revelation. One of the prophets expressed in the following words this fact, of which he felt himself the living proof: "Can two *walk together*, except they be agreed? . . . surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He *revealeth* His secret unto His servants the prophets." *Godet.*

8. The Lord is wont to forewarn His people by His prophets before He smites them with desolating judgments. This forewarning the prophet now gives, as verse 8 implies: "The lion hath roared." God has uttered His fearful note of warning as one about to smite; who can refuse to prophesy when thus called to it of God? The prophet means to say that in the presence of such demonstrations of coming judgments, he should be not only false to God, but false to his countrymen, if he did not solemnly announce God's message, and call them to repentance.

9. This is a call to the people of Ashdod and Egypt, and, by implication, to all the nations named and doomed in the first two chapters, to convene upon the mountains that overlook Samaria, and be witnesses to her great tumults, disorders and crimes, and to the oppressions done in the midst of her. Guilty as those nations are, they will see deeper guilt and more outrageous crime in Samaria. They are to be witnesses of her doom; let them first witness her sins.

10. These are the people of Samaria. De spite of all the light of nature and the super-added light of Divine revelation, they yet *act* as if they knew not how to do right. The trouble is not their ignorance, but their moral perverseness. Knowledge of duty does them no good: they will go on in sin as if they had no moral sense—no knowledge of right. II. C.

*Who store up.* In the Hebrew this is a participle, the *stowers*, making the phrase more emphatic and personal. And what did they *store*

*up?* To them it seemed that their *palaces* were filled with silver and gold, with corn and wine, with whatever could minister to their convenience or luxury. But in the eyes of the Lord they stored up violence and robbery, for all was gained unjustly, wrung by oppression from the weak. And they had been in fact only *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.* B. C.

11. There shall come an enemy—one who shall pervade the whole land. He shall bring down thy strength, and shall spoil thy palaces. The Assyrians were this enemy. The desolation they wrought was complete, as the reader may see in 2 K. 17.

12. Some of the people might have fled to Damascus for refuge; hence this reference to the few left there. The devastation would be most terrific and complete.

13-15. The curse of extermination fell on Samaria mainly because her wealth was ill-gotten, and represented her cruel, iniquitous oppression of the poor and innocent.

Chap. 4. The prophet still addresses the proud, oppressive, but effeminate people of Samaria, describing them (verse 1); predicting their captivity (verses 2, 3); in irony, bidding them go on in their sins (verses 4, 5); reciting successive judgments from God—famine, drought, blasting, pestilence, and the overthrow of some of them even as Sodom—all, however, failing to bring them back to God (verses 6-11); therefore the Almighty bids them prepare to meet Him in His desolating judgments (verses 12, 13). II. C.

The reign of Jeroboam II. was one of brilliant military success and of profound moral degradation. No sterner picture of an utterly rotten social state was ever drawn than this book gives of the luxury, licentiousness and oppressiveness of the ruling classes. This chapter deals rather with the religious uncleanness underlying the moral filth, and sets forth the self-willed idolatry of the people (verses 4, 5), their obstinate resistance to God's merciful chastisement (verses 6-11), and the heavier impending judgment (verses 12, 13). A. M.

1. *Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan.* Hear this, ye great and rich men of Samaria, that feed full and carelessly, like the kine in the fat pastures of Bashan; ye who oppress the poor and crush the needy; and say to your princes and judges, Set deep fines and condemn freely, that we may feast upon the offences of the people. *Bp. II.*

1-3. Bashan, a region on the east of Jordan, was renowned for its rich pastures and breeds

of cattle, fine, fat and strong. (See De. 32 : 14 ; Ps. 22 : 12 ; Ezek. 39 : 18.) Especially the "bulls of Bashan," as in David's reference (Ps. 22 : 12), were fat, strong, fearless, ferocious : "Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." Perhaps with a tacit but cutting allusion to them, Amos meant to say "Ye cows (not bulls) of Bashan, fat enough indeed and well fed ; fierce and cruel enough toward your helpless poor ; but shamefully effeminate and cowardly where real danger lies—hear ye these words ! The Lord is about to put His hook in your nose, and take you away to a hopeless captivity. Ye shall be driven out through the breaches made in your city walls, as a man drives out his cows through a gap in their fence—each cow straightforward. This is the general course of thought in these three verses. H. C.

**3.** *And ye shall go out.* The prophet here recurs to his first image, the *king of Bashan*. The walls of Samaria would be broken down by the besieger. Those who had oppressed the needy and crushed the poor would not have the courage to stand in the breach and risk their lives there. Like the cattle to which they are compared, driven through a gap, they would go out, *each straight before her*, hurrying away ignominiously into exile.

**4, 5.** The prophet speaks in irony ; not in mercy, but in judgment. He bids them go on in the path that they have deliberately chosen, "This liketh you, O ye children of Israel" (verse 5) ; or, as in margin, *So ye love* ; at the same time warning them that to persist was to multiply transgression, as the word has been explained before (3 : 14) ; it was to multiply acts of treason and rebellion against God. B. C.—These verses continue and even intensify the strain of irony. "Come to Bethel, and sin on, since so you like ; try it, if you will !" Bethel and Gilgal were places noted for idol worship. H. C.

The lessons of this burst of sarcasm are plain. The subtle influence of self creeps in even in worship, and makes it hollow, unreal and powerless to bless the worshipper. Obedience is better than costly gifts. The beginning and end of all worship, which is not at the same time transgression, is the submission of tastes, will and the whole self. Again, men will lavish gifts far more freely in apparent religious service, which is but the worship of their reflected selves, than in true service of God. Again, the purity of willing offerings is marred when they are given in response to a loud call, or, when given, are proclaimed with acclama-

tions. Let us not suppose that all the brunt of Amos's indignation fell only on these old devotees. The principles involved in it have a sharp edge, turned to a great deal which is allowed and fostered among ourselves. A. M.

Intense devotion to religious service don't offset unrighteousness. You can't do evil all the week and balance up the ledger by a devout service on Sabbath. You can't do wickedness and then cover up the wickedness by intense churchism. The attempt has been made in every age. Some men seem to have a fancy for that kind of double-entry book keeping, and they think they can balance the one with the other, that they can work up so much enthusiasm in church work as to cover all their sins, and so exactly keep the new moons and the fast days that it will conceal the wickedness they are guilty of. Amos is very clear-headed on that. He says, "Go multiply your sacrifices if you will, come up to Gilgal, bring your sheep and oxen and sacrifice them there : go clear down to Beersheba if you wish to, but understand distinctly that does not take the place of righteousness." Church is good when it produces righteousness. Church, religious service, religious exercises, religious enthusiasm—all that belongs to the external service of the Church, all that is excellent so long as it produces religious life, genuine integrity of character, charitable and sympathetic feeling toward mankind, and a devout service and loyalty to God. *Aggers.*

**6.** After declaring the presumptuous idolatry of the Israelites, the prophet describes their obstinate continuance in it, which was such that they could not be withdrawn from it by any afflictions or punishments, and be turned to worship and serve the true God. In this and the following verses are enumerated the several afflictions with which they were visited, such as famine, verse 6 ; drought, verses 7, 8 ; destruction of the fruits of the earth, verse 9 ; pestilence, war and defeat, verse 10 ; and the overthrow of some of their cities, verse 11. At the end of each of these punishments it is to be observed that the prophet adds in the name of the Lord, "yet have ye not returned unto Me." *Dunans.*

**6-11.** God complains of His people's incorrigibility under the judgments which He had brought upon them in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them His displeasure that they might by repentance make their peace with Him ; but it had not that effect. It is five times repeated in these verses, as the bur-

den of the charge, "Yet have you not returned unto Me, saith the Lord; you have been several times corrected, but in vain; you are not reclaimed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home." This intimates that that which God designed in all His providential rebukes was to influence them to return to Him. That if they had returned to their God they should have been accepted, He would have bid them welcome, and the troubles they were in should have been removed. That the reason why God sent further troubles was, because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that He should afflict. That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly that they should force Him to do that which He did so unwillingly. "You have not returned to Me from whom you have revolted, to Me with whom you are in covenant, to Me who stand ready to receive you, to Me who have so often called you." II.

The blaze of indignation changes into wounded tenderness, as the prophet speaks in the name of God, and recounts the dreary monotony of failure attending all God's loving attempts to arrest Israel's departure by the mercy of judgment. Mark the sad cadence of the fivefold refrain, "Ye have not returned unto Me, saith the Lord." That repeated complaint of the inefficacy of chastisements has in it a tone of sorrow and of wonder which do not belong only to the prophet. If we remember who it was who was "grieved at the blindness of their heart," and who "wondered at their unbelief," we shall not fear to recognize here the attribution of the same emotions to the heart of God. To Amos, famine, drought, blasting, locusts, pestilence and probably earthquake, were five messengers of God, and Amos was taught by God. If we looked deeper, we should see more clearly. The true view of the relation of all material things and events to God is this which the herdsman of Tekoa proclaimed. These messengers were not "miracles," but they were God's messengers all the same. Behind all phenomena stands a personal will, and they are nearer the secret of the universe who see God working in it all, than they who see all forces except the One which is the only true force. "I give cleanness of teeth. I have withholden the rain. I have smitten. I have sent the pestilence. I have overthrown some of you." To the prophet's eye the world is all aflame with a present God. In the case

of the individual, he is a wise man who regards all outward evil as having a possible bearing on his bettering spiritually. "If a drought comes, learn to look to your irrigation, and don't cut down your forests so wantonly," say the wise men nowadays. "If pestilence breaks out, see to your drainage." By all means. These things, too, are God's commandments, and we have no right to interpret the consequences of infraction of physical laws as being meant to punish nations for their breach of moral and religious ones. If we were prophets, we might, but not else. But still, is God so poor that He can have but one purpose in a providence? Every sorrow, of whatever sort, is meant to produce all the good effects which it naturally tends to produce; and, since every experience of pain and loss and grief naturally tends to wean us from earth, and to drive us to find in God what earth can never yield, all our sorrows are His messengers to draw us back to Him. Amos's lesson as to the purpose of trials is not antiquated. A. M.

Consider that *God's hand or purpose* is in every providential dispensation. Consider that God has a *specific moral end* to accomplish in every visitation that He lays upon us. Consider that these providences are *sure to accomplish their mission upon us*—viz., to chasten, soften, reclaim, or else to harden, render obdurate and ripen for final destruction, as in the case of Pharaoh, ancient Israel and a multitude of others. Afflictions of every kind should humble us, awaken us to serious reflection and earnest inquiry as to their meaning. They are never sent in vain. A gracious purpose is behind them, or a fatherly rebuke is in them, or the dark cloud is ominous of coming wrath, if we haste not to repent and bring forth fruit meet for repentance. J. M. Sherwood.

II. But he has still another lesson to teach us—viz., the awful power which we have of resisting God's efforts to draw us back. "Our wills are ours, we know not how," but, alas! it is too often not "to make them Thine." This is the true tragedy of the world that God calls, and we do refuse, even as it is the deepest mystery of sinful manhood that God calls and we can refuse. What infinite pathos and grieved love, thrown back upon itself, is in that refrain, "Ye have not returned unto Me!" How its recurrence speaks of the long-suffering which multiplied means as others failed, and of the Divine charity, which "suffered long, was not soon angry and hoped all things!" How vividly it gives the impression of the obstinacy that opposed insensibility to all effort,



and clung the more closely and insanely to the idolatry which was its crime and its ruin ! The very same temper is deep in us all. Israel holds up the mirror in which we may see ourselves. If blows do not break iron, they harden it. A wasted sorrow—that is, a sorrow which does not drive us to God—leaves us less impossible than it found us. A. M.

12. "Therefore" implies that by the very necessities of His moral government, since all discipline and chastisement fail, exterminating judgments *must come!* The word "thus," which here raises the question, *How* will God deal with them ? refers to the previous verses. The answer therefore is—As I have exterminated some of your cities, root and branch, even as Sodom and Gomorrah, so will I do to the whole nation. *Because* I have purposed to do this, I now give thee warning—"Prepare to meet thy God!" Ye must meet Him, coming with exterminating judgments; there is no escape; therefore be in readiness! The spirit of this announcement seems to be that the decree of judgment had gone forth, and its execution was fixed in the counsels of Heaven; and yet this fact is declared, not with the expectation that the masses will hear and repent, but rather in the hope that some individuals might; and that it might stand as a warning to all other guilty nations in later times. It will be noticed that the primary sense of the passage relates to Israel as a nation, and had its fulfilment in the final desolation and captivity effected by the Assyrian power as stated 2 K. 17. But in principle it applies with even augmented force to all the incorrigibly wicked, summoned to meet God in the final judgment day. It warns them to be ready to meet Him then and there, by turning at once to become His friends and people. Oh, might the wicked only be wise in time, and make the Great Judge their friend while they may, so freely and with such welcome! H. C.

There is something awfully significant in the silence as to what *this* is which Jehovah will do to Israel. Like the thrilling pause before the crashing thunder-storm, comes this pause before the awful cry, *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* Yet still He is *their God*; their case is not yet desperate; it is not yet too late for a true repentance, and a *return quite to Jehovah.* No one is yet lost to whom God calls, *Prepare! Houghton.*—The certainty of judgment is the basis of a call to repentance, which may avert it. The meeting for which Israel is besought to prepare was, of course, not judgment after death, but the impending destruction of the

northern kingdom. But Amos's prophetic call is not misapplied when directed to that final day of the Lord. Common sense teaches preparation for a certain future, and Amos's trumpet note is deepened and echoed by Jesus: "Be ye ready also, for . . . the Son of Man cometh." Note, too, that Israel's peculiar relation to God is the very ground of the certainty of its punishment, and of the appeal for repentance. Just because He is "thy God," will He assuredly come to judge, and may you assuredly prepare, by repentance, to meet Him. The conditions of meeting the Judge, and being "found of Him in peace," are that we should be "without spot, and blameless;" and the conditions of being so spotless and unsearchable are, what they were in Amos's day, repentance and trust. Only we have Jesus as the brightness of the Father's glory to trust in, and His all-sufficient work to trust to, for pardon and purifying. A. M.

This day, this hour, you live but once—and this setting sun will have taken one irrecoverably from the allotted days of your probation. The earth is our place of probation—and it is *all*—literally, absolutely *all*. In that probation, if ever, you and I are to be prepared for that vast eternity on which we enter in a few days. If not prepared then, we are never to be prepared. Point to the slightest proof whatever, or to the slightest presumption that another season of probation is to be granted beyond the judgment of the great day. But there is none. *Barnes.*

13. *For, lo, He that formeth.* The force and beauty of this description are increased in the original by its brevity. In the Hebrew there are not half as many words as are found in the translation. And, besides this, each of the five verbs, *form, create, declare, make, tread*, is in the participle. This makes the prophet's words more vivid. There is a similar description in 5: 8, 9. *He that formeth*, that moulds and fashions the mountains as easily as *the potter* shapes the clay. The word is the same in Hebrew.

*Treadeth upon the high places of the earth.* He treads down, tramples on and has in subjection whatever is loftiest or most unruly. His power is absolute, and His name is *the Lord, Jehovah*, the Self-existent, the Unchangeable, *the God of Hosts*, the Maker, Upholder and Sovereign of all beings and things that exist. B. C.

To give his readers some just sense of the majesty of that Being whom sinners of that and of every age must meet in judgment, he names a few of His mighty acts. The passage

has scarcely a parallel for its beauty and sublimity. The Creator must be indefinitely greater than His works ; but look at *them*—the mountains and the winds ; note how He can tell man all his thoughts : how He can change the glory of the morning into darkness ; and with the majestic march of a God, tread upon the high places of the earth—Jehovah, God of the armies of heaven, His name ; then say, Is it well for thee to rouse His wrath to flame and then to fall before it ? II. C.

The magnificent proclamation of the name of the Lord which closes the chapter, is meant as at once a guarantee of His judgment and an enforcement of the call to be ready to meet Him. He in creation forms the solid, changeless mountains and the viewless, passing wind. The most stable and the most mobile are His work. He reads men's hearts, and can tell them their thoughts afar off. He is the Author of all changes, both in the physical and the moral world, bringing the daily wonder of sunrise and the nightly shroud of darkness,

and with like alternation blending joy and sorrow in men's lives. He treads "on the high places of the earth," making all created elevations the path of His feet, and crushing down whatever exalts itself. Thus, in creation almighty, in knowledge omniscient, in providence changing all things and Himself the same, subjugating all, and levelling a path for His purposes across every opposition, He manifests His name, as the living, eternal Jehovah, the God of the covenant, and therefore of judgment on its breakers, and as the commander and God of the embattled forces of the universe. Is this a God whose coming to judge is to be lightly dealt with ? Is not this a God whom it becomes us to be ready to meet ? A. M.

It is remarkable that though this chapter begins with caustic irony, yet it ends with the most tender, solemn warnings. Hence the irony is not malign, but is benevolent—used only for the better moral effect—not for any satisfaction to be found in inflicting a keen and cutting castigation. H. C.

## AMOS, CHAPTERS V., VI.

5:1 HEAR ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel.  
 2 The virgin of Israel is fallen ; she shall no more rise : she is cast down upon her land : there  
 3 is none to raise her up. For thus saith the Lord God : The city that went forth a thousand  
 shall have an hundred left, and that which went forth an hundred shall have ten left, to the  
 4 house of Israel. For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall  
 5 live : but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba : for Gilgal shall  
 6 surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. Seek the LORD, and ye shall  
 live ; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour and there be none to  
 7 quench it in Beth-el : ye who turn judgement to wormwood, and cast down righteousness  
 8 to the earth ; *seek him* that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death  
 into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night ; that calleth for the waters of the  
 9 sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth ; the LORD is his name ; that bringeth  
 10 sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress. They  
 11 hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch  
 therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat ; ye have  
 built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them ; ye have planted pleasant vine-  
 12 yards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof. For I know how manifold are your trans-  
 gressions and how mighty are your sins ; ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that  
 13 turn aside the needy in the gate *from their right*. Therefore he that is prudent shall keep  
 14 silence in such a time ; for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live ;  
 15 and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the  
 good, and establish judgement in the gate : it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will  
 16 be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. Therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts,  
 the Lord : Wailing shall be in all the broad ways ; and they shall say in all the streets, Alas !  
 alas ! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamenta-

17 tion to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing : for I will pass through the midst of  
 18 thee, saith the Lord. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord ! wherefore would ye  
 19 have the day of the Lord ? it is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion,  
 and a bear met him ; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent  
 20 bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light ? even very dark, and no  
 21 brightness in it ? I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn  
 22 assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not  
 23 accept them : neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away  
 24 from me the noise of thy songs ; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judge-  
 25 ment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Did ye bring unto me  
 26 sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel ? Yea, ye have borne  
 Siceuth your king and Chium your images, the star of your god, which ye made to your-  
 27 selves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord,  
 whose name is the God of hosts.

6 : 1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of  
 Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come !  
 2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see ; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great : then go down  
 to Gath of the Philistines : be they better than these kingdoms ? or is their border greater  
 3 than your border ? Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come  
 4 near ; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the  
 5 lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall ; that sing idle songs to  
 6 the sound of the viol ; that devise for themselves instruments of music, like David ; that  
 drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments ; but they are not  
 7 grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that  
 8 go captive, and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away. The Lord  
 God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord, the God of hosts. I abhor the excellency of  
 Jacob, and hate his palaces : therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.  
 9, 10 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. And  
 when a man's uncle shall take him up, even he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out  
 of the house, and shall say unto him that is in the innermost parts of the house, Is there yet  
 any with thee ? and he shall say, No ; then shall he say, Hold thy peace ; for we may not  
 11 make mention of the name of the Lord. For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and the great  
 12 house shall be smitten with breaches, and the little house with clefts. Shall horses run upon  
 the rock ? will one plow *there* with oxen ? that ye have turned judgement into gall, and the  
 13 fruit of righteousness into wormwood : ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say,  
 14 Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength ? For, behold, I will raise up against  
 you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, the God of hosts ; and they shall afflict you  
 from the entering in of Hamath unto the brook of the Arabah.

**Chap. 5.** In this chapter the prophet laments the fall of Israel ; exhorts the people to seek the Lord ; portrays the glory and power of Jehovah, as reasons why He should be both feared and sought ; rebukes the sins of the people, and affirms God's abhorrence of the mere *formas* of worship without the heart and without justice and righteousness toward fellow-men. H. C.

**1-3.** *Amos predicts the approaching period of Israel's decline and fall.* The "word" or message of God is addressed to the "house of Israel"—*i.e.*, the entire nation. Because it is a part of the chosen people of God against whom he is moved to speak, and because he shares the deep sympathy of Jehovah in behalf of this people, he calls his message a "lamentation" or elegy. Other prophets, pre-eminently Jere-

miah, used the same tender, plaintive, broken utterances in connection with the sin and punishment of Israel and Judah. The figure of a "virgin" he, like others, employs to denote the outwardly prosperous life of the State ; the luxury, power and wealth upon which it prided itself. Never was the separate kingdom of Israel more prospered and powerful than during the long reign of Jeroboam II. And now, at the height of this prosperity, Amos announces that it is soon to cease, and that the nation is to be overcome and destroyed. In the city, he says, that sent forth a thousand warriors only a hundred shall remain. His meaning is that nine tenths of the people shall perish or be removed from their land. B.

**3.** The glory of cities was graduated by the number of men they could send out for war.

The passage shows how fearfully their strength had departed. The city that once sent forth a thousand had now but a hundred left; so that the house of Israel was shorn of its military strength. H. C.

**4-6.** *Yet God's conditional promise of mercy and continuance is still pressed upon His Israel.* As from the very beginning of God's dealing with this disobedient, defiant people, so to the very end we discern the sublimely affecting fact of His longsuffering and patient forbearance, never wearying in the endeavor to win back their trusting, loving allegiance. Therefore this very prediction of Amos, here employed as a warning, is followed by an earnest exhortation with promise. *Seek ye Me!* is the persuasive injunction. *And ye shall live!* is the sure promise. Then succeeds as earnest a dissuasive from their idolatrous practices. Seek *not* Bethel and Gilgal, those iniquitous centres of idol-worship; for they shall be cast down and brought to nought. And again we hear the earnest *exhortation and promise*; followed now by sharper threatening, of exterminating fiery judgment against the entire nation. B.

**5.** The prophet Amos said, "Bethel shall come to nought," and it has come to nought. A more forlorn spot it is not easy to imagine. The city that once crowned the hill with its strong walls has given place to a handful of wretched huts, mere heaps of stones and mud roughly piled together. The magnificent stone reservoir, more than three hundred feet in length by two hundred in breadth, is broken. The springs that filled it and made it a storehouse of wealth to the fields below now run to waste. *Dalles.*

Among the last references to this place (Amos 5: 5) it is said, "Bethel shall come to nought;" and whether the fact to which we are to refer was a fulfilment of this prophecy or not, we know that, sixty-nine years after Christ, Vespasian, in the month of May, before the glories of springtime had wholly departed from the Judean hills, and just on the eve of his being proclaimed emperor of Rome, was lying before this ancient town; and poor little Bethel, that once had justly been called "the house of God" and "the gate of heaven," was by the Roman arms crushed into oblivion (Josephus, Wars, 4: 9, 9). Twelve miles north of Jerusalem on the road to Shechem there is an insignificant, wretched, filthy Mohammedan village called Beitin. This is all that marks the site of ancient Bethel. S. Merrill.

**7-9.** *The unjust and iniquitous rulers are re-*

*minded of the majesty and might of the avenging Jehovah.* The leaders in evil-doing, the elders, magistrates and nobles who pervert judgment to bitter wrong, who smite righteousness to the earth, are bidden to remember Him who ruleth in the heavens, who ordaineth the courses of the stars, who sendeth light and darkness, who ordereth the beneficent succession of the seasons, and who in judgment poureth floods of great waters upon the earth, Him whom they have been taught to know and revere as the living all-creative Jehovah. In their vain confidence in impregnable fortresses, they are warned (verse 9) that this only God, whose majestic might holds sway over the vast visible universe, will bring destruction upon their strongholds, even upon their chief citadel city, Samaria. B.

**8.** Men should seek God because He is so great and so glorious—has such power to turn our day to night, and our night to day—to bring up the waters of ocean by His call, and pour them forth as of old, in the deluge. The beauty and sublimity of this passage are exquisite. Job has a similar allusion to those brilliant constellations (9: 9).

**9.** This magnificent description of the power of Jehovah closes with a word designed to make it more practical to the Samaritans who relied on the military strength of their capital—"Who makes destruction flash out upon the mighty, and desolation shall come upon the strong city." The first verb, which I render "flash out," takes its figure from the breaking forth of the dawn upon the darkness of the night—a figure which has most force in countries near the equator, where the twilight is short. H. C.

**10-13.** *Their impious character and oppressive deeds yet further exposed, and the consequences declared.* Hatred of the just magistrate, of him that *reproveth* in the city gate (where justice was administered), and abhorrence of the upright and pure, sufficiently delineate their character. Exaction of unjust taxes from the poor, wherewith to build themselves costly houses and to multiply vineyards, oppression of the prudent (or excellent) who were compelled silently and patiently to submit, and the decreeing of unjust judgment for a bribe, are the particulars which describe their corrupt deeds. And by the prophet God warns them plainly, that all their " manifold transgressions and mighty sins " are known to Him; and that He will make their wrongful gains the instruments of their punishment.

Such was the faithful representation of that

*evil time.* Outwardly the State seemed prosperous, and held high place among the nations. But inwardly it was diseased by corruption; and its decay had already begun, and was soon to be followed by death. And this was to be the sad result of God's protracted forbearance and compassion toward Israel. With all the prosperity He had given, the deliverances He had vouchsafed, the warnings and entreaties He had pressed upon them for centuries and generations, the course of kings and people had been steadily increasing in disobedience, rejection and defiance of His worship and His commands. They had persisted in idolatry and in the immoralities and iniquities which grew out of their impious false worship. B.

**11.** For these sins of oppressing the poor, God will tear them away from their houses and vineyards. However much they may build the one and plant the other, He can frustrate their hope of enjoying them. It is hard fighting against God. No wisdom and no strength can withstand Him. H. C.

**14, 15.** Again God urges repentance and reformation, and again conditionally promises His grace in their continuance. *Seek good and not evil, that ye may live.* As another prophet expresses it in another form, *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?* Turn from your seeking of evil, which brings death, to the seeking of good, which ensures life. "So the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken." This had been their boast, that Jehovah was exclusively their God. Even in their extreme defection from His laws, they dared to claim His presence still. Now, God condescends to say, "Only turn from evil and seek good, and your claim shall be made true. I will be with you!" And to the turning from evil and seeking good is added the more specific injunction, *Hate the evil, and love the good!* This implies the substitution of a new and right principle, which shall control the heart and the life. This principle will lead to the establishment of equity in administering justice, and it will introduce all truth and uprightness into human conduct and social dealing. There will be no more oppression or extortion, no more vice or crime, no more false worship, no more forgetfulness or disregard of God and His pure heart worship.

This simple stranger from Judah, this obscure and lowly herdman has now uttered his pathetic message of warning to Israel. One of the very last, it was also one of the plainest

and most direct, both in its announcement of coming judgment and of still proffered mercy. We know the result. The message wrought only wrath against the messenger. It reached not the heart, nor changed the life of the self-destroyed people. And in due time, after still further merciful delay, Jehovah finally abandoned the Ten Tribes of the kingdom of Israel, and scattered their remnant untraceably among the nations. B.

**16.** *Therefore the Lord.* Twice in the two previous verses the prophet mentions *the Lord God of Hosts.* Here with increased solemnity he adds *the Lord,* the sovereign Master and Ruler, who calls His servants to account. The position of the word is most unusual, and so emphatic. *Therefore* points to the sins referred to in verses 5-12.

**17.** Whenever the Hebrew phrase, used here and meaning *pass through*, is employed of God, it signifies punishment, that He *can* by no means remain among them, but must pass through and leave them, as Jerome remarks in this place. It is not simply *through thee*, but *through the midst of thee*; overlooking none, sparing nothing, visiting vineyard and city, striking down rich and poor. B. C.

**18-20.** In their foolhardiness some had expressed their desire that this day of the Lord might come, madly daring Jehovah to do His worst. Upon them God denounces special woe. He asks, What will this day of the Lord be to you? and answers, Only darkness, and not light; no rays of light in it; no mitigation to its horrors. Then, by two expressive figures of a class natural to the mind of one trained in fields and deserts where wild beasts have their homes, he shows that to attempt to flee from God in any direction would be only to meet Him there in a more fearful form. What else can any sane mind think of the daring impiety that challenges God to show His power to curse and punish, save that it is the veriest madness? Do such men suppose they can cope with Omnipotence? (See p. 390.)

**21, 22.** The people were deluding themselves with the notion that they were high in favor with God, because they kept up the forms of the Mosaic worship. To dispel this delusion, the Lord solemnly protests to them that He not only takes no pleasure in their worship, but thoroughly abhors it: "I hate, I loathe your feast days." The sentiment of these verses appears in several other prophets—in Hosea, as we have seen, 6:6; 8:13; 9:4; Isa. 1:11-15; Micah 6:6. H. C.

*The Meaning and Value of the Old Testament Sacrifices.*

In the Mosaic sacrificial system three great ideas were embodied and emphasized—viz., self-dedication, thanksgiving, expiation or atonement for sin. If the reader will turn to the first four chapters of Leviticus, he will see that they treat respectively of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering and the sin offering. In these four chapters we may find the elements of the system, and sufficient illustration of this analysis of its underlying ideas. The prominent idea of the burnt offering, which was to be "without blemish," to be presented of the offerer's "own voluntary will," and to be wholly burned, by the priest, upon the altar, was that of complete self-dedication to God. As the worshipper brought his best gift, and offered it entire upon God's altar, so was he to present himself "a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God." Of the meal offering and peace offering, which are closely related in meaning, the prominent idea was thanksgiving. In these sacrifices the devout Jew brought the best products of his lands or herds, and offered them back to God, in acknowledgment that they were His gifts, while, as a part of the ceremony, the worshipper ate a portion of the offering, in token of his fellowship with God in the enjoyment of His mercies. This offering usually followed the burnt offering of dedication as its natural sequence. The sin offering comes next, and crowns the system. It expresses the consciousness of sin, the need of reconciliation to God and the faith that God is ready to approach the sinner in mercy, and Himself to bear away the burden of his guilt. Its chief ceremonies were the sprinkling of blood before the veil of the sanctuary, the solemn confession of the sins of the people and the symbolic removal of those sins by the sending of the scapegoat into the wilderness. The deeper significance of these ceremonies was that the people acknowledged that the covenant relation to God was broken by sin, and confessed, in the slaying of their victims, that the wages of sin was death, but that they still hoped in God's mercy, because of His willingness to accept by substitution the life of the offering for the penalty of transgression. How far the Jews understood what in the light of the new dispensation is so clear—that this was a symbolic, not a real substitution; that the blood of bulls and goats could never really take away sins (Heb. 9 : 9 ; 10 : 4)—we cannot say. But it is

certain that the fundamental idea of this ceremony for the Jews was substitution—a conception which tended at once to deepen the sense of sin and to promote the assurance of its forgiveness—a conception which, therefore, had both a great practical value for that time, and an important use in preparing the way for the better apprehension of that real penal and moral substitution which God at length accomplished for the penalty due to sin in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.

The development of these ideas would naturally occur in the order named—self-dedication, thanksgiving, atonement. In the order of importance, the series would be reversed. The biblical order of the sacrifices is the logical order. God's first requirement of the worshipper is that he shall consecrate himself to His service. The offering is nothing in itself; it is of value only as it symbolizes and expresses this consecration. When, later, in the prophetic period, the people had lost the living sense of God by their disobedience, the prophets proclaimed, in burning words, the vanity of the ceremonies of sacrifice, when not accompanied by real devotion and obedience (Isa. 1 : 11-15 ; 66 : 3 ; Amos 5 : 21, 22 ; Micah 6 : 6-9). No offering was acceptable to God in which the reality did not lie behind the form. The people were dissuaded from bringing any offering, unless they brought with it "the sacrifices of God, . . . a broken and a contrite heart." The whole spirit of the prophetic teaching, from Samuel onward, was that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15 : 22). When this primal condition of consecration and obedience is met, then naturally follow the offerings of thanksgiving and communion. Hence, in the meaning of the meal and peace offerings, which follow the burnt offering, we trace the next steps of that development of the religious life in which the heart is prepared for the deeper meanings and truths of the sin offering. Here we meet the problem of conscience: "How shall man be just with God?" The ideas underlying this offering touch the core of man's moral and religious life, and lift his thoughts to the very nature and attributes of the holy God.

These truths which underlie the system of sacrifices are of the highest practical meaning and value for the moral and social life, and form a compact and consistent basis for religion. Man's relation to God is the great theme of religion. Involved in this relation are the problems of the Divine nature, human sin and

the reconciliation of man to God through some act of the Divine mercy, which shall, at the same time, vindicate and satisfy the demands of God's holy law and nature. The sacrificial system, as developed in Israel under Divine training, gave important testimony on all these questions. It testified to the absolute holiness of God, and thus laid a firm foundation for the development of religious truth, and supplied the essential principle for the promotion of a deeply religious life. The measure of every religion is its estimate of the Divine holiness. No system can continually and healthfully promote even morality, whose corner-stone—the conception of the Divine holiness—is loose or shifting. The Levitical system was clear and emphatic on this fundamental question. Nor did it, when rightly apprehended in its real spirit, teach a conception of God's holiness as a mere hard or naked justice. Its whole presupposition was that God was merciful. Had He not been merciful, He would not have invited and sanctioned the service of sacrifice, and assured the worshipper of His willingness to accept his offering. In the disclosure of God's nature, so far as it is made in this earlier stage of revelation, "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." His justice is absolute and inviolable, but it hinders not His mercy. It only conditions and directs it into such modes of revelation and operation as to secure the best good of all beings.

The sacrifices have also important testimony to bear concerning man. They affirm his sin and guilt. They confess his moral weakness and inability to climb up by efforts of his own into favor with the Holy God. The truth of human depravity—universal and guilty—depends upon no text or group of texts, but is the underlying assumption of the whole Old Testament system and discipline. The sin which the law so clearly revealed and condemned, the sacrificial system, in its vivid symbolisms, held up in the perpetual remembrance of the people. The sacrifices were, therefore, a continual call to confession and penitence. They were the language of action in which Israel for centuries acknowledged her sins and pleaded for forgiveness. They assumed that salvation could come from God's free grace alone. The sacrifices did not solve the problem of atonement, but they kept alive that vivid sense of sin and that keen perception of God's holiness, whose reconciliation is the chief point of the problem. They therefore emphasized the need, and sharpened the desire for re-

demption, and thus became an expressive symbol and prophecy of the manifestation at once of Divine mercy and Divine justice, which God should at length make in the offering of the great High Priest, who, in the consummation of the ages, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 10: 26). *G. B. Stevens.*

**24.** If their worship was to be acceptable, it must be in accordance with God's commands; there must be a renunciation of idolatry and implicit obedience. And justice and equity, what was due to man, so long disregarded and violated, must fill the land like a flood of waters. Like them *judgment must roll*, carrying all before it. And this was to be no sudden and transient reformation. The prophet uses two images: first, that of rolling water; then that of a *stream*, which is not only *mighty*, but constant; not a *torrent* or wady soon swollen and soon dried up, but a river flowing at all seasons, never failing.

**25, 26.** The prophet is dwelling on the main charge brought against Israel—worshipping God in ways of their own devising. Had the people served Him with undivided heart, they would have adhered faithfully to the appointed ritual; they could not have supposed that any offerings, however numerous and costly, could be acceptable which were presented to idols, though in the name of the true God. And this was a sin not peculiar to the prophet's times. It had shown itself from the very first. In the wilderness, soon after the wonderful deliverance from Egypt, and amid the most signal proofs of God's power and love, the people indulged in idolatrous practices, while they professed to worship Jehovah in the way that He had appointed. The contemporaries of Amos were the true descendants of those who perished in the wilderness. They were one with them in principle, no less than in blood. Hence that generation is addressed in words which literally belong only to their ancestors. *B. C.*

**27.** The Jews were never thoroughly cured of their proclivities toward idols until their seventy years' captivity. The captivity of the Ten Tribes practically destroyed their nationality, and sunk them into oblivion, so that it cannot be known whether they ever abandoned their idol worship. *H. C.*

#### *Special Truths and Personal Lessons.*

1. Both as respects nations and individuals prosperity is no sure sign of God's present favor. It affords neither assurance of its own

continuance, nor pledge of safety from coming evil. As it stimulates self-indulgence and so tempts to wrongful gains and vicious courses, it is the sharpest trial of character and the severest test of principle.

2. Here as elsewhere the Scriptures present the majesty and might of God as displayed in the universe as a legitimate ground for our reverence, obedience and worship. The framer and ruler of the earth and the worlds, the ordainer of the night and day and of the seasons, is the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the God whose favor it is our highest duty and privilege to seek.

3. All human possessions are worthless and all human defences powerless against the proposed judgments of God.

4. God sees and avenges the oppression of the poor and helpless. He abhors and punishes corruptness in public officers, deceit and falsehood in all private relations, wrong-doing toward every soul and all idolatrous service of self or the world.

5. The perversion of justice and the general corruption of a people are the sure intimations of a nation's decay and the precursors of its destruction.

6. The gracious dealings of God with Israel are repeated with every nation to whom His special favors are extended in this Christian age. While He needs the cry of even a formally prostrate people and delivers in special emergency, He extends His constant favors to that nation in which His laws and worship are generally and habitually honored.

7. For specific personal application, how simple and effective is the injunction and promise thrice repeated: *Seek ye Me, the Lord! and ye shall live!* B.

**Chap. 6.** Woes on cities and their chief men who can be at ease in their great sins, and in the very face of fearful judgments from the Almighty; further specifications of their sins of luxury, intemperance and oppression; followed by announcements of yet more desolating judgments, fill up this chapter.

1. The word Zion embraces Jerusalem and her leading minds, as, on the other hand, Samaria carries us to the chief city of the northern kingdom. The people of Samaria trusted in the natural strength of their position—on the mountains. "Judah and Israel were renowned as chief among the nations" of Western Asia. In every age sinners who scorn the warnings of Jehovah, and would fain be at ease in Zion despite of them are near the point

where judgments break forth and "there is no remedy!" H. C.

How many easy-going idlers and silent partners we have in the churches! Probably nine tenths of our members are engaged in no active Christian work. Where are the nine? Many of them would claim that they lead quiet and peaceful lives, do no harm and bring no dishonor upon the cause of Christ. But is this enough? Let us ring it out in their dull ears from God's Word, that idleness is a sin! Let us arouse them from this stupor by shouting in their ears that many of the severest curses of God have fallen on persons for doing and saying nothing! *E. P. Marvin.*

Indolence is the worst enemy that the Church has to encounter. Men sleep around her altar. Life has no significance, eternity no awfulness, enjoyment no obligations, bereavement no solemnity, suffering no prophetic suggestions of an hereafter, holiness no enrapturing beauty, but they stretch on beds of ease and sleep amid the most stirring revelations of Providence. Where the Church *lives* and holds the truth of Christ, not as the mortuary of a buried benefactor, but as a present inspiration, it never will suffer its members to sit idly with folded hands, looking lazily out on white fields of harvest, where no reaper's sickle rings against the wheat, but will send them forth to work with an impulse that no disappointment can paralyze, no misgivings keep back. F. D. H.

The believer carries no worse enemy about him than *spiritual sloth*. This foe is so much the more subtle, as it does not make its attacks suddenly, but creeps upon him unawares; and the more dangerous, as it assaults both soul and body, and both soul and body are too ready to side with it against themselves. Other sins are, for the most part, either fleshly or spiritual; but spiritual sloth affects both body and mind; and whosoever gives way to it deprives himself of many blessings, which are promised to striving, diligent, circumspect souls. *Hill.*

Those who are lukewarm are neither earnest for God nor utterly indifferent to religion. They are perhaps best described as those who take an interest in religion, but whose worship of their idol of good taste or good form leads them to regard enthusiasm as ill-bred and disturbing, and who have never put themselves to any inconvenience, braved any reproach, or abandoned any comfort for Christ's sake, but hoped to keep well with the world, while they flattered themselves that they stood well with God. *W. B. Carpenter.*

That is a weighty saying of Augustine:



"God counts among the reprobate not only those who have received their comfort on earth, but those who grieve because they have not."

It is right to exhort men to make sure their calling and election in heaven. Only, we must remember, heaven is not a spot to lie down in, and there, on our couches, tuning our harps, to think how much misery we have personally escaped. The Christian heaven is an exalted society of self-sacrificing spirits, bound together in mutual fellowship by their common consecration to Him who is above them, where each accepted soul will go from strength to strength, run and not be weary, toil and not faint, aspire and not be baffled, do good and not be misinterpreted, and will be assimilated, in ever closer and closer affinity to Him who is its Light and Life, in whom whosoever liveth and believeth shall never die. Let us fearlessly carry our standard beyond the old line of our inferior moods. And if any of us find we are asking for a religion that shall make us comfortable, or put us at ease, be sure we are asking out of a false spirit, what no reverential prayer should dare to petition, what cannot be, and are no longer in a posture to receive the Master's gifts nor the favor of our God. F. D. H.

One feels like going to work and working vigorously for very sympathy as he gazes away at the universal and splendid executiveness that reigns and triumphs throughout the celestial spaces. The swift and ever-rushing spheres rebuke his idleness, his languor, his feebleness. In them God has expressed His own forceful nature. In them He has made proclamation that men should do with their might what their hands find to do. It is not the Bible only that tells us that God detests lukewarmness, and loves to see us "zealously affected in a good thing"—the lesson was flaming among the stars long before it was copied into the Book. *Burr*.

2. Compare your condition with that of other kingdoms close at hand. Look to the east, the north and the west. B. C.—The thought is, Judah and Israel have stood high among the nations of their time, in military power, in richness of country and in the light of a true religion; their responsibilities are therefore the greater, and so much the more is their guilt in disowning and abusing the great Giver of blessings.

3-6. They thrust the fear of danger from sin far away, and welcome near the worst forms of wrong, even legalized oppression, rolling in luxury, lounging in idleness, feast-

ing on fatlings from flock and stall, chattering to the sound of the viol. Their country and the cause of their nation's God have no place in their hearts. This last clause, "they grieve not for the affliction of Joseph," is analogous to "being at ease in Zion," and shows why the woes of God came down on Israel. They had no true sympathy with God or with His people.

7. As the men of wealth and high standing have been foremost in oppressing the poor and wresting the cause of the meek; foremost also in luxury, self-indulgence and recklessness of the cause of God, so they shall be first among the captives, heading the sad procession.

8. The pride and moral corruption of the people were so monstrous and so intrinsically hateful to God, that He abhorred the very country for their sake, and must consign to long and blank desolation. And there the land of Palestine lies to-day! H. C.

God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if He abhors their temple for the iniquity of that, no marvel that He hates their palaces for the injustice and oppression He finds there. That creature which we take such a complacency and put such a confidence in as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to Him. He hates the palaces of sinners for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein (Prov. 3: 33). The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. And if God abhor them, immediately it follows, He will deliver up the city with all that is therein, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy, that will lay it waste and make a prey of all its wealth. Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God are undone to all intents and purposes. H.

10. A man shall not have a brother or a son left to do him the last offices of his burial; but if his uncle or his kinsman shall undertake to bring out his corpse, he that is the overseer of these funeral rites, joining with him in that work, shall say to that one which is left alive in the house, Is there any one remaining of the whole number of the family? and he shall say, No. Then shall the other answer again, Rest thou humbly and silently in the just pleasure of the Almighty, this is His work; as for us, our sins have been so grievous that in conscience thereof it is not for us to call on the name of the Lord for a release or mitigation of His judgment. *Bp. Hall*.

12. The questions of the prophet vividly represent what is unnatural, absurd and fruit-

less. Do horses run up the steep cliff? Do men plough with oxen on the naked rock? Would not the toil be preposterous? Our translators have well added *there* in the second clause, in which something must be supplied. Would not a man be thought mad who should attempt such a thing? Amos seems to address himself to the nobles and judges of Israel, as if he had said, Is your conduct more reasonable, who have violated the eternal laws of God, have turned law and equity into a means of oppression and violence, and yet hope to prosper, escaping the Divine vengeance? *For*

(he adds) *ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock.* The corrupt judge turns what is wholesome into poison; he makes what should be sweetest, bitterest. B. C.

14. This prediction almost names the Assyrian power—manifestly means it. God raised them up; they came, and did indeed lay the land desolate “from the entering in of Hamath”—a very common phrase for their northern border, and a natural thoroughfare outward to Hamath—“unto the river of the wilderness.” H. C.

## AMOS, CHAPTERS VII, VIII.

7 : 1 Thus the Lord God shewed me : and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth ; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowing. And it came to pass that when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee : how shall Jacob stand ? for he is small. The Lord repented concerning this : It shall not be, saith the Lord.

4 Thus the Lord God shewed me : and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline ; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee : how shall Jacob stand ? for he is small. The Lord repented concerning this : This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.

7 Thus he shewed me : and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou ? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel ; I will not again pass by them any more : and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste ; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel : the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there : but prophesy not 13, 14 again any more at Beth-el : for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son ; but 15 I was an herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees : and the Lord took me from following 16 the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord : Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not *thy* 17 word against the house of Isaac : therefore thus saith the Lord : Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line ; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

8 : 1, 2 Thus the Lord God shewed me : and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou ? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel ; I will not again pass by them any more. 3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God : the dead 4 bodies shall be many ; in every place shall they cast them forth with silence. Hear this, 5 O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When

will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, As the way of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

With the closing of the sixth chapter the record of the preaching of Amos ceases. He has found that his work has been in vain. There now comes before him a series of visions which disclose in broad outlines the future of the Hebrew people, especially of the kingdom of Israel. These visions are five in number. The first four differ from the last in that they teach in allegory, while the fifth is a direct manifestation of the Lord Himself. Succeeding these visions is the promise to the faithful. The first and second visions, of the locusts devouring "the latter growth after the king's mowing," and of the fire from the great deep that "would have eaten up the land," show God's mercy in that He saves Jacob at the prayer of Amos because "he is small." The lessons of the third and fourth make known the approaching end of the national life. The nation tried by the plumb line is found deserving of destruction. As to a basket of summer fruit, to Israel the end is near.

Between the narratives of the third and fourth visions there is told an incident by which we may learn something of the times. Because of his fearless preaching Amos has aroused the fear and hatred of Amaziah, "the priest of Bethel." Amaziah seeks to stir up King Jeroboam by saying that the bold peasant is engaged in conspiracy against the throne. To the priest's command to flee out of Israel into Judah Amos replies that it is the Lord's errand on which he has come, and closes by renewing his prophecy of evil for the priest and his family, and of captivity for Israel. It is the old story, how the wicked are self-convicted when they stand in the presence or hear the message of the good.

After the fourth vision follows that terrible

prediction, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing of the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." *Chancellor.*

**Chap. 7.** This chapter records three successive visions, shown to the prophet, each indicating the judgments impending over the land (verses 1-9); then an attempt made by Amaziah, an idol priest of Bethel, to prevent Amos from prophesying more in Bethel, and to send him back into Judah; with the defence made by Amos, and the response made by the Lord (verses 10-17).

1. That this is a *vision* presented to the spiritual eye of the prophet is indicated by the language, "Thus did the Lord God show me"—*i.e.*, cause me to see. He saw the Lord forming grasshoppers. They were young, but fast coming forward for their work of destruction; and he saw God's hand in them. The time was just when the meadows were putting forward their second growth—the after math.

2. He prayed that the Lord would forgive the sin for which this scourge was sent, and used this plea: "By whom else shall Jacob arise"—*i.e.*, stand, live; "for he is weak" and without strength against God, and against such agents of destruction as these. H. C.

3. *The Lord repenteth for this.* He suspended the full execution of His purpose, listening, as it would seem, to the prophet's supplication. It was after the locusts had eaten what they could find, that this concession was granted. The word *this* therefore points, not to what was past, but to some greater, unnamed

calumny that was to follow. A respite was granted. B. C.—The Lord heard his prayer and changed His purpose, sparing the land the judgments which this vision portended. A clear and striking case of prevailing prayer, even when God's purpose to destroy was not only formed, but made known. H. C.

He that foretold the judgment in his preaching to the people, yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee. It was the business of prophets to pray for those whom they prophesied to, and so to make it appear that though they denounced they did not desire the woeful day. Therefore God showed His prophets the evils coming that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap to turn away God's wrath, as Moses, that great prophet, often did. H.

4-6. In the second vision he heard the Lord calling for the action of fire. The original words imply a controversy, or legal judicial issue by fire, probably only in the general sense of a judgment on the people for their sins. Appalling to behold, this fire seemed to devour the great deep, and to eat up the dry land also. I construe this as a vision, and symbolic of some all-consuming desolation, doubtless by war and conquest. Again the prophet prays, but not in this case as before—"forgive"—which, if answered, would have averted the judgment; but, "*desist*;" cut short this judgment; let it be arrested midway. He uses the same plea as before, in the same words; and the Lord answered to the precise extent of his request. He desisted, after the judgment had run a part of its course. The scourge of war and indeed of captivity came, but probably with the less severity because of the prophet's prevailing prayer. These cases, as thus recorded, must have been designed of God to encourage His people to come before Him with most importunate prayer that He would avert, either in part or wholly, the judgments which He seemed about to inflict on a guilty people. H. C.

6. "The Lord repented for this." He did not change His mind, for He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? But He changed His way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy, and not in wrath. He said again, This also shall not be. The caterpillars were countermanded, were remanded, a stop put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual, fervent prayer, and how much it avails,

what great things it prevails for! A stop has many a time been put to a judgment by making supplication to the Judge. This was not the first time that Israel's life was begged and so saved. See what a blessing praying people, praying prophets are to a land, and therefore how highly they ought to be valued. Ruin had many a time broken in if they had not stood in the breach and made good the pass. See how ready, how swift, God is to show mercy, how He waits to be gracious! Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it, and looks about to see if there be any that will intercede for it (Isa. 59: 16). Nor are former reprieves objected against further instances of mercy, but are rather encouragements to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be any more than that. It is the glory of God that He multiplies to pardon, that He spares and forgives to more than seventy times seven times. H.

Amos, in point of efficacious prayer, as well as earnest desire, is to be numbered with Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Elijah, and all the rest who have had power with God and prevailed. Oh, wonderful proof of that law of love which dwells in the bosom of Jehovah, the ground and guide of all other law—that the helplessness of the creature has power with the omnipotent Creator—that the great God saves Israel because Israel is *small*! And (marvellous encouragement to prayer!) the confession of this, not lengthened arguments, but the simple, earnest cry of conscious feebleness, arrests the arm of Omnipotence! And what a reason to intercede for one's church, one's country, one's household, one's wife, one's child, one's friend, is this, that the Tekcan herdsman cried, the man oppressed and hated by kings and courts, the poor peasant on whom the nobles at Bethel looked down with scorn—he cried, and his cry went up to Him, and there came down, if not a reprieve, a respite for a whole guilty land! *Stoughton*.

7-9. The third vision will be better understood if we consider that the prophets speak of a measuring line as marking off for destroying as well as for creating; for casting down, no less than for building up. (See 2 K. 21: 13; Isa. 34: 11; Lam. 2: 8.) So here, this plumb-line evinces the moral obliquity of the people and their consequent fitness for destruction. God will not any more *pass by* them, but will take them in hand for scourging and for ruin. The "high places of Isaac" were those elevated sites so constantly chosen for idol temples and idol worship. The "sanctuaries of

Israel" were their idol temples and shrines. These were doomed to utter destruction, and at least by implication the whole land as well. The "house of Jeroboam" the Lord would cut off by the sword. He did so; Shallum (2 K. 15: 10) conspired against Zachariah, son and successor of Jeroboam, and thus ended the royal line of his house. It should be noted that in this third vision nothing is said of the prophet's interceding by prayer for the removal or even the mitigation of this judgment. He saw that it was most righteously deserved, and fully fixed in the counsels of Jehovah, and therefore he forebore to press any plea for its reversal. Essentially the same answer must be given to the question, Why did he pray "*forgive*" in reference to the first threatened judgment, and only "*desist*" upon the second? "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The conditions of acceptable prayer being fully met on our part, the Lord, on His part, will *lead* our minds in prayer, aiding us thus to ask for those things, and only those, which He is pleased to grant. H. C.

7. A wall made by a plumb-line is a wall made according to such a line, straight, perpendicular. It had been built with care and judgment, by rule and measure. By the same should it be destroyed. *I will set a plumb-line*, and that *in the midst of Israel*, for the overthrow was not to be limited to a part, but was to embrace all. In other passages the plumb-line is spoken of as employed no less in destruction than in erection. B. C.

The wall here we may regard as representing the law of God. That law was made by a plumb-line. It was squared to correspond with the immutable justice of the builder. All its sides are perpendicular; all its angles are right angles. There are no leaning towers about it; no nooks or corners where a sinner can hide; no curves in which strength is sacrificed to beauty. The law stands, massive and firm, like a solid cube, every stone in it fitted perfectly to all the other stones. No part of it can ever totter or crumble. Till heaven and earth pass away not one jot or tittle of the law can fail. But why does He who built the wall stand by it still holding the plumb-line in His hand? Surely not to test the wall itself and see if it is plumb. He knows that it is on such solid foundations and so solidly built that no variation, not even the slightest, is possible. He stands there to test the conformity of men to the requirements of the law—to see how far their characters and lives vary from its standard of perfection.

That is the position of the great Law-giver from age to age—not under the old dispensation merely, but also under the new—standing by His law with a plumb-line in His hand. He is holding that plumb-line beside each one of us. While we talk, while we toil, while we think, He is measuring our "want of conformity" to His holy law. And He notes all the variations. Now it is written that we leaned so many degrees toward the world; now that lust or passion warped and twisted us; now that, moving from the true foundation, our little wall settled, and it would have fallen if He had not upheld it by His grace. Solenn is this vision of the Holy One standing with the plumb-line in His hand. It is a vision that Christians need to study. *Interior.*

9. "The high places of Isaac" were the altar and grove of Beersheba, where Isaac dwelt and built an altar; this place was afterward abused to idolatry (chap. 5: 5). "The sanctuaries of Israel" were the places set apart for idolatrous worship, such as Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. The word "sanctuary" is used for an idolatrous temple (Isa. 16: 12). *I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword*. This was fulfilled when Shallum conspired against Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, and slew him (2 K. 15: 10); he was the last that reigned of that family. W. Loeth.

10-17. Amaziah, high priest of the calf-worship at Bethel, alarmed both at the stern menace of these predictions and at the deep effect which they are exercising upon the people, carries to the king an exaggerated and distorted version of the words of Amos, and reports him as a traitor. The king apparently does not personally interfere, but Amaziah, on his own authority, orders Amos to leave the royal chapel and city of Bethel, and return to his herds at Tekoah. Amos, before he shakes the dust of Bethel off from his feet, denounces on Amaziah the awful judgment. He has been called from his peasant-toil to prophesy, and the priest has forbidden him to "drop" God's Word against the house of Isaac. *Exterior.*

10. He makes a calumnious charge against Amos. He asserts that he had conspired against the king. There does not appear to have been the slightest ground for this accusation. The prophet had not questioned the king's power, nor made any attempt against his life. He had not entered into any secret league with others; but as God's messenger he had denounced idolatry, and foretold the extinction of the royal house. This was *constructive treason* in the eyes of Amaziah, and he availed

himself of this false plea against an obnoxious opponent, simply because he thought it would have most weight with the king. From the words of the message we may infer that the preaching of Amos *in the midst of the house of Israel* had not been fruitless.

**11.** *For thus Amos saith.* Amaziah speaks of Amos as of one who utters his own words and thoughts, not of one claiming Divine authority. He sends the king a summary of those words with which the land had been filled. But brief as it is, part is false, and the remainder an unfair account of the prophet's teaching as a whole. Amos had not said that *Jeroboam should die by the sword*. It was the house of *Jeroboam*, his family, that was so threatened. Had he really predicted the king's violent death, a jealous ruler might have suspected him of treason, of taking measures to make his words good. Hence this perversion of his prophecy by Amaziah. For the rest, Amos had indeed foretold the captivity of the people, but there is no mention of the crying sins denounced, which were its cause, or of the encouragement offered to the penitent. B. C.

**12, 13.** Amaziah then seeks to dissuade Amos from any further prophecy against Israel, and urges him to return to the land of Judah. B.—Retire home to thy own country of Judah, and there bestow thy pains and admonitions; but venture not any more to vent thy prophecies in Bethel; for thou knowest the condition of this place; it is both the king's sanctuary for his devotion and the king's court for state; meddle not any more with prophesying here lest thou provoke the king's anger against thee. *Ep. Hall.*—Flee thee away thither with all speed, and there eat bread and prophesy there; there thou wilt be safe, there thou wilt be welcome, the king's court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee, the priests and princes will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honorable maintenance. How willing wicked men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to say to the seers, See not, or see not for us. H.

**14, 15.** Amos first gives his own personal defence. With beautiful simplicity he replies. "I was no prophet; I did not come up unto this profession because my father was a prophet before me; but I was earning my bread by honest labor when the Lord took me from following the flock, and said, 'Go, prophesy unto My people Israel,' not *Judah*, as you propose, but *Israel*. How could I do otherwise than obey this Divine mandate?" H. C.

The answer of Amos is a calm refutation of Amaziah's insinuations. He did not belong to the order of the prophets, nor was he a *prophet's son*, he had not been trained in any school of the prophets. He did not prophesy for the unworthy motives attributed to him, but simply in obedience to the command of God, who had called him to be a prophet, while engaged in an humble occupation. His aim was not bread, or profit, or honor, but merely to do God's bidding. He was a simple *herdsman* when the summons came. He uses a term commonly restricted to those who took charge of the larger cattle. But the context shows that he was a shepherd—the Lord took me as I followed the flock—and with this agrees the rare word with which, at the opening of his prophecy, he had described his occupation (see on 1: 1). He adds that he was a *gatherer of sycamore fruit*, or more exactly, a *dresser, cultivator of sycamores*. B. C.

**16, 17.** The rest of his reply comes directly from the Lord Himself. Thou hast forbidden me to prophesy against Israel; for this impiety the Lord reveals to thee thy doom—thy wife a harlot in the city; thy sons and daughters falling by the sword; thy landed estates divided by line to others; thou thyself shall die in a foreign and so in a polluted land, and the nation shall be carried away into captivity—a fearful warning against interfering with the Divine mission of God's faithful prophets! This captivity was to Assyria, effected by Tiglath-pileser B.C. 722, or sixty-two years after the death of this Jeroboam. H. C.

Amos closes all by using the exact words which he was charged with having uttered (verse 11). *Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land*. The words are the very same in Hebrew, though they have been varied by our translators. The people so often reproved for idolatry and other sins, but all in vain, shall be carried away by the enemy, and settled in a foreign land. B. C.

**Chap. 8.** This chapter opens with the last vision in this series of four (verses 1, 2), which is followed by further details of the great and damning sins of the people, and of the terrible judgments then impending. H. C.

Three times Israel had been summoned by Amos to *hear this word* of warning and rebuke (chap. 3: 1; 4: 1; 5: 1); then came (in chap. 6: 1) the startling cry of *Woe!* As Augustine has said, "With what a crash is it buried, as it were, to awaken their stupetied senses!" And then had followed (in chap. 7) the series of visions in which they had been shown the

meaning of God's repeated judgments, His longsuffering toward them. *It shall not be, saith the Lord* (verse 3); *This also shall not be, saith the Lord* (verse 6); but at last the certain punishment, *I will not again pass them by* (forgive them) *any more.*

1. By the type of the *ripe fruit* Jehovah had shown the ripeness of Israel not for judgment, but for punishment (cf. Rev. 11: 18). The fruit harvest is the very last harvest of the year; when this crop is gathered there is nothing more to do. And for Israel all had been done that could be done. *Houghton.*

1, 2. Summer fruit ripens quick and soon decays. The people had ripened for ruin, and their ruin was near at hand. God can pass by them, sparing and deferring His judgments no longer. H. C.

2. This ripeness not being to service was inevitably to destruction. There is never any other alternative. Where matured powers are not employed for the service of God and of mankind, but are simply used for selfishness, decay and destruction must follow. *Houghton.*

It is a solemn lesson, applying to each soul as well as to communities. By neglect of God's voice, and persistence in our own evil ways, we can make ourselves such that we are ripe for judgment, and can compel longsuffering to strike. Which are we ripening for, the harvest when the wheat shall be gathered into Christ's barns, or that when the tares shall be bound in bundles for burning?

3. The tragedy of that fruit gathering is described with extraordinary grimness and force in the abrupt language of verse 3. The merry songs sung in the palace (this rendering seems more appropriate here than "temple") will be broken off, and the singers' voices will quaver into shrill shrieks, so sudden will the judgment be. Then comes a picture as abrupt in its condensed terribleness as anything in Tacitus, "Many the corpses; everywhere they fling them; hush!" We see the ghastly masses of dead ("corpse" is in the singular, as if a collective noun), so numerous that no burial-places could hold them; and no ceremonial attended them, but they were rudely flung anywhere by anybody (no nominative is given), with no accustomed voice of mourning, but in gloomy silence. It is like Defoe's picture of the dead-cart in the plague of London. Such is ever the end of departing from God—songs palsied into silence or turned into wailing when the judgment bursts, death stalking supreme and silence brooding over all. A. M.

4-6. The guilty people are once more ex-

horted to hear the threatened judgments of the Almighty, and the recital of these judgments is prefaced by a further description of their oppressions of the poor. So eager are they to drive hard bargains, and wrest from the poor the last pittance of their earnings, they cannot wait for the new moon and for the Sabbath to pass over—so would they hurry off their religious duties to get back again to their extortion and fraud. Their religion stood in the way of their sin in no other respect than that it demanded a few hours' suspension of trade and business. It utterly failed of its proper influence—viz., to make their heart thoroughly benevolent, and, consequently, their business life just. What a depth of corruption in morals do such sketches of the ways of business and trade reveal! The reader will be careful to note how sharply the Lord rebukes and exposes such outrages on human rights and on commercial justice, and how fearfully He punishes the guilty. H. C.

The crimes that ripened men for this terrible harvest are next set forth, in part, in verses 4-6. These verses partly coincide verbally with the previous indictment in Amos 2: 6, etc., which, however, is more comprehensive. Here only one form of sin is dealt with. And what was the sin that deserved the bad eminence of being thus selected as the chief sign that Israel was ripe and rotten? Precisely the one which gets most indulgence in the Christian Church—viz., eagerness to be rich, and sharp, unkindly dealing. These men, who were only fit to be swept out of the land, were most punctual in their religious duties. They would not on any account do business either on a festival or on Sabbath, but they were very impatient till—shall we say Monday?—morning came, that they might get to their beloved work again. Their lineal descendants are no strangers on the exchanges or in the churches of New York or London. They were not only outwardly scrupulous and inwardly weary of religious observances, but, when they did get to "business," they gave short measure and took a long price, and knew how to turn the scales always in their own favor. It was the expedient of rude beginners in the sacred art of getting the best of a bargain, to put a false bottom in the *ephah*, and to stick a piece of lead below the shekel weight, which the purchaser had to make go up in the scale with his silver. There are much neater ways of doing the same thing now; and no doubt some very estimable gentlemen in high repute as Christians, who give respectability to any church or

denomination, could have taught these early practitioners a lesson or two. They were as cruel as they were greedy. They bought their brethren as slaves, and if a poor man had run into their debt for even a pair of shoes, they would sell him up in a very literal sense. Avarice, unbridled by the fear of God, leads by a short cut to harshness and disregard of the claims of others. There are more ways of buying the needy for a pair of shoes than these people practised. Some serious reflections ought to be driven home to us, who live in great commercial communities, and are in manifold ways tempted to "learn their ways, and so get a snare unto our souls," by this gibbeting of tempers and customs, very common among ourselves, as the very head and front of the sin of Israel, which determined their ripeness for destruction. A. M.

What branch of commerce is without its delusive labels, its broken promises, its advertising fictions, its postponed payments, its calculated bankruptcies, its hollow contracts? The brilliant audacities of the great commercial centres have their lame and creeping copies, hardly less cruel or calamitous, back in the little rural villages, in sight of graveyards where sleep the ashes of clean handed ancestors, living and dying, in their day, in the faith of a God who has righteousness and judgment for the habitation of His throne. The grand difficulty with our popular piety is that it is still trying to find a way, in this nineteenth century of the Gospel, of serving two gods together. Is there any remedy? The remedy will be found by finding through what popular mistakes the mischief has crept in, and by raising against them the everlasting principles of the Bible morality, the old-fashioned safeguards of personal uprightness, on the stanch commandments of a God of righteousness. F. D. H.

5. *Saying, When will the new moon be gone.* When shall we have done with these solemn feasts wherein we are not allowed to buy and sell? would God these new moons and Sabbaths were once past that we might sell our corn at a high rate, making the measure of the wheat small, and the weights wherewith the silver is weighed great and heavy; and falsifying the balances by deceit. Bp. H.

*Making the ephah small, and the shekel great.* The ephah was a measure containing one and one-tenth bushels of our measure. The shekel here mentioned is not a piece of money, but a fixed weight of two hundred and twenty grains, or just over half an ounce. The Jews had no coined money before the return from Babylon,

when they coined silver of the weight of a shekel. All mercantile transactions were carried on by lumps, bars, or rings of the precious metals, weighed by acknowledged standard weights. Thus we see how these fraudulent traders cheated in two ways; first, by having the ephah, which held the corn they sold, too small, and then by having the shekel, which weighed the silver they received in payment, too heavy. Further, they sold the refuse (literally, "that which fell") of the wheat—that is, the grains which, being shriveled, fell through the sieve, and which contained no flour. *Tristram.*

The world predominates in our hearts, when it engrosses the principal train of our thoughts; when it is the last idea that possesseth us when we lie down, and the first when we arise; when it distracts us in our attendance on the duties of religion, interrupts our devotion in prayer, diverts our attention in hearing and fetters our minds in meditation. I mean not to assert, that every degree of influence which it has in these respects betrays its absolute ascendancy over the mind; for who then could free himself of this charge? But when these worldly thoughts engross the mind by its own consent, when they make us grudge the time bestowed on religion, and eager to resume our earthly occupations, as soon as we have lulled our consciences with an unmeaning attendance on its ordinances—when, like the Jews of old, we say of the Sabbath, "what weariness! when will it be over, that we may sell corn?" This is not only a preferring of the world to God, but in reality a solemn mockery of Him, not less provoking than open profanity itself. R. W.

7. The "excellency of Jacob" cannot with propriety mean anything else than Him who is, or ought to be, the sole ground of confidence and occasion of "boasting" to the nation (Hos. 5: 5). He gives his own being as the guarantee that judgment shall fall. As surely as God is God, injustice and avarice will ruin a nation. We talk now about necessary consequences, and natural laws rendering penalties inevitable. The Bible suggests a deeper foundation for their certain incidence, even the very nature of God Himself. As long as He is what He is, covetousness and its child, harshness to the needy, will be sin against him, and be avenged sooner or later. God has a long and a wide memory, and the sins which He "remembers" are those which He has not forgiven, and will punish. A. M.

8. The prophet asks with sublime impres-



siveness whether the enormities practised in Israel are not such as to make the land itself shudder as with the convulsions of an earthquake. Must not every inhabitant *mourn* in godly sorrow for such wickedness, or *mourn* under the infliction of due chastisement? B. C.

9. *I will cause the sun to go down at noon.* This points to no eclipse, but has a distinct historical reference. Not by gradual decay, but by a sudden unlooked-for crash, was Israel to perish. Pekah was a military chief. He had reigned for seventeen years over Israel in peace, when, along with Rezin, king of Syria, he attempted to extirpate the line of David, and set a Syrian, son of Tabael, on the throne of Ahaz, who was weak and helpless. Tiglath-pileser swooped suddenly down on Pekah, and swept away the whole population of the east and north—Gilead, Bashan and Galilee, to the plain of Jezreel. Pekah's sun set, and all was night, with no dawn. *Tristram.*

8-10. Something darker beyond is dimly hinted in that awful, vague, final threat, "the end thereof as a bitter day." Now all these threats were fulfilled in the fall of the kingdom of Israel; but that "day of the Lord" was, in principle, a miniature foreshadowing of the great final judgment. Some of the very features of the description here are repeated in the new test, with reference to it. We cannot treat such prophecies as this as if they were exhausted by their historical fulfilment. They disclose the eternal course of Divine judgment, which is to culminate in a future day of judgment. The oath of God is not yet completely fulfilled. Assuredly as He lives, and is God, so surely will modern sinners have to stand their trial; and, as of old, the chase after riches will bring down crashing ruin. We need that vision of judgment as much as Samaria did when Amos saw the basket of ripe fruit, craving, as it were, to be plucked. So do obstinate sinners invite destruction. A. M.

11-13. The time would come when they who now despised it would sigh in vain for a word from Jehovah. They had silenced the prophets (2: 12), and perhaps had already banished Amos (7: 12), and the time would come when Jehovah would take them at their word. Then He would send a *hungering into the land*, that bitterest of all hunger, not for bread, but for the comfort and light of the Word of God. The fulfilment of this threat began with the destruction of Israel; but even to this day it is continued, in those of that people who are

looking and longing for their Messiah, refusing to find Him in Jesus of Nazareth. *Houghton.*

11. This was to be the righteous retribution for slighting the Divine warnings given through the prophets. In the day of darkness and perplexity they should hunger and thirst for one word from heaven, and should not obtain it. The *Word of the Lord* would be *precious* indeed, when it was no longer to be heard. Then would they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. B. C.

What the judgment itself is that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity, not of bread and water (which are the necessary supports of the body, and the want of which is very grievous), but a much sorer judgment than that, even a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them, when He would no more speak to them as He had done, and when He would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance. H.

No one could feel the value of a Divine revelation and ministry more than Amos. He prized the prophetic mission as one of Israel's richest mercies; to hear God speaking to his own soul was his greatest privilege and comfort. For God no more to speak, for a cessation or a suspension to come of the condescending intercourse of the Divine teacher, for the hoarse voice of reproof as well as the gentle tones of pity to be silent, was felt by him to be the greatest of evils. Amos saw that *that* was coming. There had come mildew, and blight, and scarcity, and want, and the land had groaned; but blacker clouds of evil were in the distance, were sailing nearer and nearer. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God," so cries the prophet, "that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." We see the value which is here set on Divine truth for the nourishment of man's soul. We see here a comment on the everlasting maxim, "Man liveth not by bread alone." We see here how in a fulness of sufficiency we may be in straits.

Blessed be God that this worst of judgments—this famine of the word of life—has befallen none of us yet. We may have lost many comforts and joys that we greatly prized; but we have the Bible left, we have the manna which

falleth from heaven, the Gospel and the ordinances of Christ left, we have the water of life left, sheaves upon sheaves of Divine instruction are being reaped every Sabbath. God's banquetting house is open, and the tables are spread, and servants come to us week after week, telling how the King has made a great supper, and all things are ready, and we are to come to the marriage. But if men will not come now, and eat and be satisfied, days of famine shall follow; they shall follow in eternity. *Stoughton.*

**12.** Why was the search vain? Has not God promised to be found of those that seek, however far they have gone away? The last verse tells why. They still were idolaters, swearing by the "sin of Samaria," which is the calf of Bethel, and by the other at Dan, and going on idolatrous pilgrimages to Beersheba, far away in the south, across the whole kingdom of Judah (Amos 5:5). It was vain to seek for the Word of the Lord, with such doings and worship. The truth implied is universal in its application. God's message neglected is withdrawn. Conscience stops if continually unheeded. The Gospel may still sound in a man's ears, but have long ceased to reach farther. There comes a time when men shall wish wasted opportunities back, and find that they can no more return than last summer's heat. There may be a wish for the prophet in

time of distress, which means no real desire for God's Word, but only for relief from calamity. There may be a sort of seeking for the Word, which seeks in the wrong places and in the wrong ways, and without abandoning sins. Such quest is vain. But if, driven by need and sorrow, a poor soul, feeling the thirst after the living God, cries from ever so far off a land of bondage, the cry will be answered. But let us not forget that our Lord has told us to take heed how we hear, on the very ground that to him that "hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away." A. M.

**13.** Youth and strength, with all their spirits and energy, would be unavailing. There would be no renewal of strength for those who had not waited on the Lord. B. C.

**14.** "The sin of Samaria" was the calf set up at Bethel by Jeroboam, who committed a great sin in so doing, and made Israel to sin. "The manner," or way, "of Beersheba" is rendered "the god of Beersheba" in the Greek version, which expresses the sense rather than the words. The "way" or "manner" signifies the same with "the way of worship;" and the phrase is often used so in the Acts, particularly chap. 19:23; 24:14. Here it is taken figuratively for the god or object of their worship. Beersheba was a place noted for idolatry. *W. Loeft.*

## AMOS, CHAPTER IX.

**9:1** I saw the Lord standing beside the altar: and he said, Smite the chapters, that the thresholds may shake: and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one  
**2** of them escape. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; and though  
**3** they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.  
**4** And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword,  
**5** and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. For the Lord, the God of hosts, *is* he that toucheth the land and it melteth, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like the River; and shall sink again, like  
**6** the River of Egypt; *it is* he that buildeth his chambers in the heaven, and hath founded his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out  
**7** upon the face of the earth; the LORD is his name. Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of  
**8** the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face  
**9** of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. For,

10 I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as *corn* is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

In this closing chapter the prophet reaches the utmost height of sublimity. Jehovah, standing upon the altar at Bethel, smites down with terrible blows the sanctuary there of Jeroboam's calf. In vain do the worshippers flee away; neither hell nor heaven can screen them from the Almighty. In vain do they hide in the multitudinous caves and thick forests of Carmel: God's hand searches them out, and in the very depths of the sea He commands serpents to bite them. And by this visitation of the Eternal Israel is to be sifted "like as corn is sifted in a sieve." Tossed ceaselessly to and fro, ever in motion, finding on earth no nation where it may make its home, Israel is to be scattered throughout all lands. But it is not forsaken of God. Not the least grain is to fall to the ground. Only the chaff perishes. Fierce as may be the tossing within the sieve, the providence of God guards and keeps within its circle all that is good.

And, finally, there is a restoration for Israel, but it is to be wrought through Judah. When Amos wrote Uzziah was reigning in the plenitude of his power. Yet he describes the house of David as a mere *booth* (in our version *tabernacle*), a palace no longer, but a hut of boughs, such as Jonah erected to hide his head. And such the royal dynasty had become when its representative was a Galilean carpenter. But God would "close up its breaches, and raise its ruins, and build it as in the days of old" (5: 11). And upon this was to follow an era of peace and happiness, and Israel was to be no more uprooted out of its land. From the hut of Nazareth was to commence a new church, in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and among them Israel itself. For "I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, . . . and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (verses 14, 15). When we

remember that Amos, though of Judah, was a prophet sent to Israel, we cannot but be struck with the reappearance of the same phenomenon which we noticed in speaking of the prophet Hosea—viz., that the blessedness of the latter days is consistently by all the prophets associated with the family and lineage of David. R. P. S.

**Chap. 9.** This chapter opens with the fifth and last special vision shown the prophet; affirms the complete destruction of the guilty, apostate people of Israel; denies in vivid forms all possibility of their escape (verses 1-7, 10), yet promises the rescue of a small remnant (verses 8, 9); predicts the raising up of the fallen tent of David, and the saving of the true Israel for an era of extraordinary and long-continued prosperity. II. C.

1. In the previous visions Amos had been shown the nature, the certainty, the nearness of Israel's overthrow. Here he sees the Lord Himself come down to execute judgment. He is described as *standing upon*, or perhaps *by, the altar*. B. C.

I paraphrase it thus: "I saw the Lord standing beside the great altar of burnt offering in Jerusalem, and He said, 'Smite the capitals of the columns, and make the very thresholds tremble, and dash them in pieces upon the heads of all the people within, and the remnant of them I will slay with the sword; whoever flees shall not escape, and he that gets away shall not be finally delivered.'" In this vision the people are supposed to be assembled in the temple for safety against the judgments of God, but He comes down with His destroying angel and orders the whole temple to be crushed down from pinnacle to basement, that it may fall crashing upon the heads of the assembled throng. Then, whom the falling temple does not crush, the sword shall slay, and none shall escape. II. C.

3. The contrast between the height of Car-

mel and the sea that washes its base is very natural. Should they fly as far as Carmel, as the securest place in Israel, they would find no hiding-place there, and should they plunge into the sea, and reach its bottom, the tooth of the deadly serpent awaited them.

4. *Though they go into captivity.* Suppose them to have escaped the promiscuous slaughter, and to suffer themselves to be quietly led away by the conquerors, they may not look for safety. Absolute submission will not shield them. The threatening words of Moses would be literally fulfilled: "Among these nations . . . thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life" (De. 28 : 65).

5. The prophet, to show how terrible was the enmity they had provoked, adds, as before (4 : 13 ; 5 : 8, 9), a sublime description of the power and majesty of Jehovah. B. C.

5, 6. These bold descriptions of Jehovah's power over the material world are adduced here in the same line of thought with the preceding—to show how hopelessly futile must be every attempt of guilty men to evade His scourge or escape His retributions. The manner of the original is graphic: "And the Lord Jehovah of Hosts—He is touching the earth, and then it melts, and all the dwellers in it mourn; its whole surface is lifted up like the rising Nile, and then subsides as the river of Egypt (the effects of an earthquake, as in Amos 8 : 8). He builds His chambers in the heavens; He has founded His arched vault upon the earth (*i.e.*, the blue concave firmament. He calls for the waters of the sea, and then pours them out upon the face of the earth—Jehovah, His name." H. C.

6. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of His common providence, causes vapors to ascend out of it, and pours them out in showers, the small rain, and the great rain of His strength, upon the face of the earth; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord (chap. 5 : 8) and make Him our Friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear Him and dread having Him our Enemy. H.

7. This verse aims to confront and demolish another delusive reliance of the apostate people—viz., that, being the seed of Abraham and children of the covenant, brought by a series of miracles into the land of promise, they were invincible against any heathen power, since their God would surely protect them. The Lord replies to their thought, "What are ye to Me more than the Cushites and Ethiopians? I

did indeed bring you up out of Egypt; so I also brought the Philistines from Capthor (Crete), and the Syrians from Kir"—the region of the river Cyrus. Does such a removal insure the perpetual prosperity of any people? H. C.

*Have not I brought up.* God seems to use the language in which the people boasted of what had been done for their ancestors. It was most true that His hand had rescued them. As it is said before (chap. 3 : 2), *You only have I known of all the families of the earth.* But when they cast off their allegiance to Him, and became like the heathen around them, they renounced their high and peculiar position. Their deliverance from Egypt, which should have made them serve God faithfully, had no more significance for them than the migrations of neighboring nations. Their movements also had been determined by the providence of God.

8. *The sinful kingdom* is that of the Ten Tribes. It was founded in rebellion, it was maintained by the observance of idolatrous worship at Dan and Bethel. The people were hindered from going up to Jerusalem to keep the solemn feasts, lest they should desire to return to their allegiance to the royal line of David. Jeroboam had made Israel to sin, and his sin had been loved and followed by others. *The kingdom was sinful*, and therefore, after due probation, *the kingdom must be destroyed*. Not so the race to which its subjects belonged. *The house of Jacob* should not be utterly destroyed. Among them there should ever be a remnant, a few in every age found faithful, worthy to bear the name of Jacob, or Israel.

9, 10. The image employed here expresses at once the dispersion and preservation of Israel. Their dispersion had been foretold by Moses (Lev. 26 : 33 ; De. 28 : 64). The people are to be scattered among all nations (*cf.* Hos. 9 : 17), yet not one individual is to be overlooked. The remnant shall be saved, but the sinners cut off. Davison says on this passage: "This concise prophecy contains a draught of determinate history; the kingdom, the body politic, to be destroyed from off the face of the earth; but the people, the stock, not to be destroyed. The people to be sifted through all nations; but the seed so sifted not to perish, nor its least grain to fall to the earth. It is a history made up of opposite particulars: destruction and preservation, scattering and perpetual custody combined. It is the true outline of Jewish history. Is it of any other whatever? Place the prophecy in any imaginable

age ; after the fall of the kingdom of Israel, or after the Babylonian conquest ; the phenomenon of its fulfilment remains ; its constant, perpetual fulfilment." B. C.

The centrifugal force of world-wide dispersion, with the centripetal of national cohesion, could not have been more distinctly expressed. It is not the calamity of national downfall, of expatriation and wandering to the ends of the earth, of proscription and outrage such as may well make Christians blush, even when it still breaks out in our own century ; it is not even the tragic cause, as Christians believe, of this unmatched disaster, and which weighs like a doom not finally exhausted. It is the power of resistance—the invincible reaction against all forces of change or dissolution—the stubborn identity with his fathers, which from the heights of modern commerce or the fair equality of intellectual and political conflict, as from the depression of other days, makes the Jew still retire into solitude, to nurse a sad memory or a hope yet unfulfilled. Were the Jews converted, and were Palestine restored to them, would unbelief be able to hold its own ? *Cairns*.

**II.** *The tabernacle of David.* Under the figure of rebuilding a tabernacle, that was partly demolished by force, partly decayed with age, the prophet foretells the restoring of the kingdom of David to one of his seed after it should be fallen into a very low condition, and the enlargement of his subjects in the room of those who had shaken off their obedience. *Bp. Chandler*.

The reigning family of David had been sadly broken down by the revolt under Jeroboam ; far more so still by their apostasy into idol-worship, oppression and other immoralities, for all which God had doomed the sinners of His people to be utterly cut off ; but the day will come for rearing up again this royal line and its kingdom. He will wall up the breaches of the "double house," the two kingdoms (for so the plural pronoun, rendered "thereof," should naturally mean) : "I will raise up David's ruins and build his tent as in days of old." These promises suggest the original covenant with David's line (2 Sam. 7 : 16). "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee ; thy throne shall be established forever." King Messiah is to come in this royal line, and, according to the strain of this prophecy, events ripen for His coming. Only in Him can this prophecy find an adequate fulfilment. H. C.

It is striking that Amos, prophesying in

Israel, closes with a promise, not to the Ten Tribes primarily, but to the royal house of David and to Israel only through its restoration. Strange comment on human greatness, that the royal line was not to be employed in the salvation of the world until it was fallen. The royal palace had to become the hut of Nazareth ere the Redeemer of the world could be born, whose glory and kingdom were not of this world. Who came to take from us nothing but our nature, that He might sanctify it, our misery that He might bear it for us. *Pusey*.

**II., 12.** In Acts 15 : 14-17 James says, "Simon Peter has been relating to you how God has visited the Gentiles to convert some of them to Himself ; and to this agree the words of the prophet Amos ;" and then he quotes substantially from the Septuagint version these two verses. James gives the general sense with entire accuracy—viz., that God had of set purpose called the Gentiles within the pale of His Church, to inherit in it among His people.

**13-15.** Great prosperity and abundance are implied. The reaper will have so much to do, and the ploughman withal is so eager to get in readiness a large field, that he treads on the heels of the reaper. The mountains terraced and cultivated in grapes to their summits shall seem to distil new wine. It flows down their declivities as if the mountains themselves were becoming liquid. H. C.—This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things which all those are and shall be blessed with who are in sincerity added to Christ and His Church ; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of His Spirit ; they shall have bread, the bread of life, to strengthen their hearts, and the wine of Divine consolations to make them glad ; meat indeed and drink indeed, all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the Word and Spirit of God ; these had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish Church, Divine revelation and the power that attended it were to be found only within that enclosure ; but in Gospel times the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges by the Gospel of Christ preached and professed and received in the power of it. H.

I cannot close this Book of Amos without a passing tribute to his clear, forcible and earnest style ; to the richness of his figures, drawn chiefly from the familiar but often sublimely grand fields of nature, and from the scenes of husbandry ; to the sublime and solemn gran-

deur with which he recites the significant names of Jehovah, God of Hosts ; and not least, to his warm sympathy with the wronged and outraged poor, and to his intense abhorrence of the luxury, pride, ostentation, and especially the *oppression* which manifestly was the crowning and damning sin of the leading men in the kingdom of Israel. We shall need to go far to find keener invectives against these Heaven-provoking sins, or a more earnest wielding of Jehovah's thunders against the oppression of the poor, the perversions of justice, and the enslaving of men. H. C.

So ends this ancient and memorable book of prophecy. The storms roll far away into the distance, and there is a vision of peace. Any fulfilment of the prophecy in the comparative prosperity of Judah under Uzziah, and its escape from Assyria, would be quite inadequate to meet the prophet's language. Most of it has not been fulfilled in any literal sense, but its Messianic yearnings have found an abundant spiritual fulfilment in the glories of the Christian dispensation, and to the Messianic age it is applied in the speech of James to the Apostolic Synod. *Furrar.*

## PROPHECY OF OBADIAH.

### 1 : 1 THE vision of Obadiah.

Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom : We have heard tidings from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, *saying*, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the nations : thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high ; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground ? Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off !) would they not steal till they had enough ? if grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes ? How are *the things of Esau* searched out ! how are his hidden treasures sought up ! All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee on thy way, even to the border : the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee ; *they that eat thy bread* lay a snare under thee : there is none understanding in him. Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau ? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one may be cut off from the mount of Esau by slaughter. For the violence done to thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But look not thou on the day of thy brother in the day of his disaster, and rejoice not over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction ; neither speak proudly in the day of distress. Enter not into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity ; yea, look not thou on their affliction in the day of their calamity, neither lay ye *hands* upon their substance in the day of their calamity. And stand thou not in the crossway, to cut off those of his that escape ; and deliver not up those of his that remain in the day of distress. For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations : as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee ; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and swallow down, and shall be as though they had not been. But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy ; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them : and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau ; for the Lord hath spoken it. And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau ; and they of

the lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, which are among the Canaanites, shall possess even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

OF the author of this shortest book in the Old Testament we have the briefest possible account. His name was Obadiah—there the record ends. The book contains historical (not prophetic) allusions to the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and the consequent captivity, and therefore must have been written subsequent to that event, yet how long after cannot be certainly determined by any evidence external or internal. The tone of the passage (verses 11-14) implies that those events connected with the fall of Jerusalem were then recent.

His subject is one—a prophecy concerning Edom. The posterity of Esau, otherwise called Edom, founded this kingdom at a very early period. They manifestly had their land under cultivation before the Hebrews entered Canaan. They appear repeatedly in the scenes of Jewish history during the reign of David, and more especially after the revolt. The early antipathy which brought Esau out with four hundred armed men to intercept Jacob on his return from Padanaram to Canaan, though sometimes kept down under the pressure of conscious inability to do his brother harm, yet seems never to have been fully suppressed. As said by Amos (1: 11), "he cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he nursed his wrath forever." This enduring hatred seized its opportunity when Jerusalem fell before the Chaldean power, and broke forth, not only in most unfraternal words, but in most cruel deeds. This was the special occasion of the prophecy here recorded. Other prophets have predicted the fall of Edom, some of earlier date—*e.g.*, Isaiah and Joel—and some contemporary, or of later date—*e.g.*, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, and the writer of Psalm 137. (See Isa. 21: 11; 34; Joel 3: 19; Jer. 49: 7-23 [closely parallel]; Ezek. 25: 12-14; Mal. 1: 3, 4.) H. C.

The opening section of Obadiah is reproduced, frequently with verbal exactness, in a prophecy against Edom found in the forty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah. The resemblance is too close to allow a doubt of the relationship. The only question is, which is the parent and which the child, unless, indeed, they should prove to be brothers. In Obadiah the ideas

appear in a natural order and logical progression, making a harmonious and compact picture, while in Jeremiah they are reversed in sequence, broken off from one another, mingled with other matter, and so deprived of their cumulative and orderly significance. Thus verses 1-4, 5, 6, 8, 9 of Obadiah correspond to verses 11-16, 9, 10, 7, 8 in Jeremiah, where the omission of all reference to the folly of trusting perfidious allies (Obad. 7) leaves the ridicule of Edom's pretended wisdom without definite justification. Therefore, if the one is directly dependent on the other, we are forced to the conclusion that Obadiah is the original, and that Jeremiah has borrowed from him, just as in the prophecies against Moab (Jer. 48) he incorporates elements from the older oracles embedded in Isa. 15, 16 and Num. 21, 24.

The motive is not the gratification of national spite, nor is the aim to either warn or edify the Edomites. The seer speaks out of the need of his own heart and to the hearts of his people. What creates his vision and compels its utterance is an indestructible sense of the eternal justice and fidelity, and of the Divine destiny of Israel in building up the kingdom of God on earth. The tragedy of Edom is but a part in the great drama. It is therefore presented on a vast stage, and has the world's history for its background. Very real and concrete to the prophet, no doubt, are the antagonisms of Israel and his enemies, but none the less really and consciously, even if in a fashion grand beyond his conceptions, it is the collision of universal forces and everlasting principles, that is embodied in them. Limited and material the presentment of those issues may be, but they carry in their bosom the consummation of the ages. Within the rivalry of Edom and Israel there was wrapped the eternal antithesis of truth and falsehood, good and evil, and the vision of an earthly kingdom on Mount Zion is finding its fulfilment in the silent, slow, but sure advent of the kingdom of God and of our Christ. *Elnstie.*

We may briefly dismiss any late date for Obadiah by appealing to his place in the canon. This argument has indeed often been pressed too far; but we may at least say that the Jews, in their arrangement of the minor prophets,

have drawn a definite line of separation between those who wrote before the Babylonian exile and those who wrote after it; and that this was a matter upon which their information could not have been insufficient. They have also evidently attempted some sort of arrangement of the earlier prophets among themselves, and have placed Obadiah among those who wrote in the reign of Jeroboam II. His exact place was, however, probably fixed by the words of Amos 9 12, where God promised that Israel should possess the remnant of Edom. Of this prophecy Obadiah's predictions seemed an enlargement, and without meaning to settle his exact date, which possibly they did not know, they placed him where his matter admirably fitted in. In Hosea and Amos we have Israel's punishment, but the latter ends with the promise of restoration, and the subjugation of Edom, his inveterate foe. It seemed, then, natural to place at the head of the roll those prophets whose subject was the fate of Israel herself; and subsequently one who foretold the subjugation of a people with whom the Israelites were ever at war, and their final supremacy. R. P. S.

*Analysis of the Contents.* The prophet is conscious of a military movement among the nations. It is instigated by Jehovah, directed against Edom, and will result in its downfall and humiliation. Spite of the strength of their rocky fastnesses, they shall be defeated and their wealth plundered. Trusted allies shall betray them, and so with all their vaunted wisdom and might the children of Esau shall be caught in the snare of their own selfish policy and utterly destroyed (verses 1-9). The cause of their doom is the wrong done to their kinsmen, the Israelites, whom they abandoned in their dire extremity, aiding their foes, rejoicing in their calamity, sharing in the pillage, cutting off the fugitives and selling them into slavery (verses 10-14). For the Divine judgment, now complete on Israel, must pass on to his heathen enemies and requite their injuries. In the general retribution the rescued people of Jehovah shall dwell safe and holy on Mount Zion, regain their old possessions, burn up Edom like stubble, overflow into the lands of the surrounding peoples, establish a strong government in Zion, and then "the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (verses 15-21). *Elmslie.*

**1.** *Thus saith the Lord God.* This is a formula claiming Divine authority for the whole prophecy.

**2.** *Behold.* Verses 2-9 contain the denunciation of Edom; verses 10-14, the cause of the

denunciation; verses 15, 16, an expansion of the denunciation; verses 17-21, a declaration of the glories of Zion, following upon the fulfilment of the denunciation.

**3.** The word translated "rock" is, in the original, *selah*, and by it the prophet probably designates Selah, which was the name of the Edomite capital, the city whose site was afterward occupied by Petra, a word of similar import. Selah was situated on either side of a deep ravine, which runs winding like a stream through precipitous and overhanging cliffs, for a distance of not less than a mile and a half. The cliffs are honeycombed with caverns, and in these caverns, reached by artificial means of access, the Edomites dwelt. The buildings which at present exist *on the ground* at Petra are not the work of the Edomites, but of their successors, the Nabathæans. B. C.

The phrase, "Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high," has in modern times received a very striking confirmation from the personal visits and examination made by a large number of travellers—Burckhardt among the earliest; Dr. Edward Robinson among the most accurate and reliable. They and others have found on the site of ancient Petra a vast amount of ruins of the homes of both the living and the dead, especially along the face of an immense gorge or chasm, where the perpendicular rock, several hundred feet in height, was improved for temples, sepulchres and private residences, chiselled from the rock itself. The massive grandeur of these ruins aids us to appreciate the description, "Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high." It also accounts for the pride and vain confidence felt by the men of Edom in the military strength of their fastnesses, and evinces the pertinence of the Divine Word, "Though thou lift thyself high as the eagle, and set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down." How vain it must ever be for even the loftiest and mightiest of men to defy the Almighty, or count themselves above the reach of His retributions! H. C.

**3, 4.** Adversity may harden instead of softening and subduing. Multitudes pass through it and are none the better. They are unyielding, unsubmitive, impenitent. They grow bitter in spirit, and accuse the God of heaven. In such a case the return of prosperity, or the gift of it, is no blessing. The heart gets haughtier than ever, and God is defied (Obad. 3, 4). *Orr.*

**5, 6.** These supposed cases—the thieves, the



night-robbers and the grape-gatherers—all have the same object—viz., to show that the spoiling of Esau would be unsparing. The interjected exclamation—"How art thou cut off!"—implies that the desolation of Esau would be more dire than that wrought by thieves and night-robbers. The latter, compelled by fear to make short work, are wont to seize what comes first to hand till they have enough for present want, or, as the case may be, all they can carry away; and so may leave some valuables behind. Grape-gatherers leave gleanings. But Esau's wealth will be carefully searched out. Those who shall come to spoil him will find all his hidden stores. The exclamation in verse 6 corresponds in form of statement precisely to that thrown into the middle of verse 5. H. C.

7. Those confederates were probably Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, with whom the Edomites joined in resisting Nebuchadnezzar; but these failed them, probably turned against them; and even their friends who were at peace with them and ate their bread deceived them in their hour of trial. "To no quarter could the Idumeans look for aid. Their allies, their neighbors, their very dependents, so far from assisting them, would act treacherously toward them, and employ every means, both of an open and covert nature, to effect their ruin." *Anon.*

8. The Idumeans confided not only in the natural strength of their country, but in the superiority of their intellectual talent. That they excelled in the arts and sciences is abundantly proved by the numerous traces of them in the Book of Job, which was undoubtedly written in their country. They were indeed proverbial for their philosophy, for the cultivation of which their intercourse with Babylon and Egypt was exceedingly favorable, as were likewise their means of acquiring information from the numerous caravans whose route lay through their country, thus forming a chain of communication between Europe and India. *Henderson.*

10. The fraternal relation in which Edom stood toward Judah is still more sharply defined by the name Jacob, since Esau and Jacob were twin brothers. The consciousness that the Israelites were their brethren, ought to have impelled the Edomites to render helpful support to the oppressed Judeans. Instead of this, they not only revelled with scornful and malignant pleasure in the misfortune of the brother nation, but endeavored to increase it still further by rendering active support to

the enemy. The hostile behavior of Edom arose from envy at the election of Israel, like the hatred of Esau toward Jacob (Gen. 27: 41), which was transmitted to his descendants and came out openly, in the time of Moses, in the unbrotherly refusal to allow the Israelites to pass in a peaceable manner through their land (Num. 20). *Delitzsch.*

The *shame* and the "cutting off forever" would be distinct, and might be somewhat widely separated in time. The form of the prophetic statement admits this distinction; the facts of history fulfilled it. The shameful defeat came from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; the final overthrow was postponed into the early ages of the Christian era.

12-14. The picture of Edom's violence and cruelty is presented to the prophet, and, as his eye traverses the canvas, he exclaims, "Do not look," "do not rejoice," "do not enter," "do not deliver," as he sees each group so engaged. The words are addressed to Edomites by way of apostrophe on what he sees them doing before his face, not as a warning against their so doing in the future. The representations of the prophetic vision are necessarily exempt from the relations of time.

15. *The day of the Lord.* The time when Jehovah will exhibit His majesty by judging and recompensing; whether the general and final day, or a particular and shortly approaching day. "The day of the Lord," in its inferior signification, is always typical of "the day of the Lord" in its higher signification, and usually, as here, throws forward the prophet's thought to the final day. That there would be a special day of the Lord was first revealed to and by the prophet Joel. B. C.

"The day of the Lord" is His time for retribution, declared here to be "near upon all the heathen." It came soon by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. "As thou" (Edom) "hast done to Jerusalem, so shall it be done unto thee; thy reward" (the sort of treatment thou hast shown to others) "shall come back upon thine own head." (See page 390.)

16. These allusions to drinking are explained by the usage of the prophets. When they bore predictions of dire calamity, they were said to carry a cup filled with a mixture which represented the wrath and vengeance of the Almighty. The ground passage is Ps. 75: 7, 8: "But God is the judge, He putteth down one, and setteth up another; for in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture: but the dregs thereof—all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out

and drink them." To Jerusalem Isaiah said (51: 17): "Stand up, thou who hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury." In Jer. 25: 15-33, this figure is carried out fully: "Take the wine-cup of this fury at Mine hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee to drink it." So also Jer. 49: 12, in a passage very closely parallel to this of Obadiah. With this view of the sense of this figure, it seems necessary to refer the first clause—"ye who have drunk on My holy mountain"—to the Jews themselves. They had taken their turn in drinking from this cup of retributive justice; now all the heathen—Edom among them—must follow. These guilty heathen nations must drink copiously, for the word rendered "swallow down" is strong—shall guzzle down, as men who love it, and suck out the very dregs with keenest relish. And this shall be the end of them—their cup of national annihilation.

17. Over against the final fate of those oppressive and wicked nations, Mount Zion stands in the strongest contrast. Turning now to promises for the people of God, the prophet portrays the victory given to Zion's side. Mount Zion shall be delivered, and, best of all, "shall become holy." This will secure her forever against such fearful calamities, for these come only as needful discipline to cleanse her from her sins. II. C.

The remainder of the prophecy (verses 17-21) declares the glories of restored and triumphant Zion, which will consist in (1) the restoration from captivity, (2) the annihilation of the Edomites and their absorption by the Jews, (3) the universal expansion of the Jewish kingdom, (4) the reign of Jehovah.

18. *The house of Jacob* . . . and *the house of Joseph*. The united remains of the two tribes and of the ten (cf. Isa. 46: 3). The overthrow of Edom, *hitherto* spoken of, to be accomplished by other hands than those of the Jews, and to be effected before the restoration from the captivity, was probably wrought by Nebuchadnezzar in the year 583 B.C., five years after the capture of Jerusalem. Malachi refers to some such overthrow, and points to the fact that the Israelites had been able to re-establish themselves in their country, while the Edomites could not do the same in theirs, as a proof of Jehovah's love for Israel (1: 2, 3). The destruction threatened in *this* verse is to be the work of the Jews themselves, the house of Jacob and Joseph being the instruments by

which Esau is finally to be annihilated. This was wrought by Judas Maccabæus and John Hyrcanus, of whom the first defeated the Edomites, B.C. 160 (1 Macc. 5: 3), and the last utterly crushed them, B.C. 130.

19. The prophet sees the enlargement of Israel on all sides after the destruction of their enemies. This enlargement takes the form of an apparent overflow of Israelitish conquerors and settlers, southward, westward, eastward and northward.

21. *Saviours*. Such as Zerubbabel, who led back the Jews from their captivity; the Maccabees, who executed vengeance on Edom; and all who, by delivering the chosen people, are types of the great Deliverer. The judges are designated saviours or deliverers throughout the Book of Judges. "Under the saviours the Saviour is concealed" (*Heugstenberg, Keil*). On Mount Zion, as being the throne of judgment, whence dominion was to be exercised over the mount of Esau. "As the mountains of Esau represent the heathen world, so mount Zion, as the seat of the Old Testament kingdom of God, is the type of the kingdom of God in its fully developed form" (*Keil*). *The kingdom shall be the Lord's*. A promise of the Messianic times, when Jehovah should be exclusively the object of worship; and when His kingdom should no longer be cooped up within the present boundaries of Judah, but should be spread throughout the world. "There is a grandeur about the promise," says Rosenmüller, "which prevents us from referring it to the times of Zerubbabel or of the Maccabees." Its truer fulfilment began when it appeared "that God was no respecter of persons, but in every nation," Israelite or Edomite, Jew or Gentile, "he that feared Him and wrought righteousness was accepted by Him" (Acts 10: 35). And it will be fully accomplished only when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." B. C.

The passage teaches that the princes reigning on Mount Zion shall rule over Mount Esau; "the elder shall serve the younger," or rather, in the much broader sense, the people who *stand with God* shall bear sway over all the realms and peoples of the earth. The wicked shall no more bear rule; "the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is Governor among the nations." This is the great truth in which the whole Book of Obadiah culminates—a glorious truth indeed!

## BOOK OF JONAH,

THE position of the Book of Jonah among the minor prophets is remarkable. It is not a prophecy, but a narrative. Unlike all the other members of the group, it does not contain the utterance, or a collection of the utterances of a prophet. With the exception of the words, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," it is from beginning to end the recital of a prophet's self will and ignorance, and his discipline and correction by God. *Elmslie*.

The narrative bears not the least trace of being a vision, or an allegory, or a parable, or a tale of old-time tradition. From beginning to end it is simple, straightforward, nobly honest and self-condemning, especially considered as written by Jonah of himself—in short, in every respect bearing the best internal evidence of truth. Then further, the book has worthy moral objects—*e.g.*, to set forth the peril of fleeing from the path of duty, however rough or even dangerous that path may be; also, the ways of God's discipline to bring His wandering servants back, and the tenderness of His pity and forgiving love toward them despite of their sins; and yet further, the principles on which God deals with nations, even the heathen, whether in judgment when they sin, or in sparing mercy when they repent. Such objects as these are great and good enough to entitle the Book of Jonah to a place in the sacred canon; or we might go farther back and say, sufficiently important to justify God in making those arrangements of His providence which constitute *His part* in these scenes of Jonah's history. But more than all, Jonah is distinctly recognized, in both the Old Testament and the New, as an historical and not a fictitious person. In Old Testament history, 2 K. 14: 25 distinctly refers to this Jonah, the son of Amittai, in these words: "He (Jeroboam II.) restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the Word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, who was of Gath-Ilepher." This city was assigned to the tribe of Zebulun (Josh. 19: 13), so that Jonah's residence was within the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. He is thus located, precisely as to

place, and proximately as to time, not later than the early part of the reign of Jeroboam II. (reigned B.C. 825-784). In the New Testament, the proof to the point that Jonah was a real and not a fictitious character is complete. (See Matt. 12: 39-41; 16: 4.) The Lord Jesus most distinctly refers to Jonah as the subject of a sign—*i.e.*, of a miracle—as having been three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and as having preached to the people of Nineveh, under which preaching they repented; and finally, He definitely compares Himself with Jonah: "Behold, a greater than Jonah is here." Now if, despite of these testimonies to the contrary, men insist that Jonah is to be accounted a fictitious character, they may say the same with equal reason of the queen of Sheba and of the wise Solomon. H. C.

Everything in the book itself has the appearance of a straightforward statement of facts, just as much so as the earlier narrative of the Book of Ruth. The persons and places mentioned are historical, and all the circumstances have the local color suitable to the period. Nothing but the peculiar character of the miracle it describes has given rise to the contrary opinion. No one in ancient times, so far as we are informed, ever doubted the literal truth of the story. Here the synagogue and the church are at one. The apocryphal Tobit refers to Jonah as a historical personage (14: 4), and Josephus recites the full details of the miraculous preservation as a genuine record of facts (*Antiq.* IX., x., 2). And, besides, we have the explicit attestation of our Lord given on two separate occasions. No rational explanation can be given of the Saviour's words, that does not imply the literal verity of the Old Testament narrative. *Chambers*.

The narrative is simple and consistent; its truth is endorsed by the express testimony of our Saviour, and the objections simply resolve themselves into a disbelief in miracles at all. One needless difficulty has been raised by the use of the word "whale" in our version of the New Testament in place of the "great fish," as it is correctly given in the old; and then the climate of the Mediterranean and the anatomy of the whale are triumphantly appealed to in disproof of the whole story. But idolatry

itself bears witness in the worship of Dagon to the fact, which naturalists have proved, that there are sharks in the Mediterranean quite capable of swallowing a man whole. On the other hand, we find incidental allusions which no impostor would have dared to insert. The prophet's three days' journey through the city is not only now known to be consistent with the vast area covered by the scattered houses and gardens of the great cities of the East, but has been confirmed by the space over which the remains of Nineveh extend. The prophetic character of the book, though its form is narrative, is seen in the use made of it by our Lord, as an example of repentance in a heathen nation, and a sign of His own three days' abode in the earth. Nay, "the sign of the prophet Jonas" must have been, even without an interpretation, a striking emblem of the resurrection, the doctrine of which is clearly implied in one passage of Jonah's "prayer to God out of the fish's belly": "The earth with her bars was about me forever; yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Jehovah, my God." P. S.

The miraculous ingredient forms the very warp and woof of the composition, and cannot by any possibility be detached without the literary demolition of the piece. Nevertheless, the fact that the mechanism or marvel of the supernatural are not dwelt upon or at all elaborated proves that the miraculous is not the prime interest or theme, but simply the machinery or vehicle of a didactic purpose. And in like manner the historical is not an object in itself, but is subordinated as means to end to subserve the ethical and religious teaching, which is the supreme motive and final aim of the book. *Elastic.*

It is perhaps a part of the simplicity of Jonah's narrative, that he relates these great miracles as naturally as he does the most ordinary events. His mind is fixed upon God's providence, and he relates God's acts as they bore upon His providential dealings with him. He tells of God's preparing the east wind which smote the palmchrist in the same way in which he speaks of the supernatural growth of the palmchrist, or of God's providence in appointing that the fish should swallow him. He mentions this, which was in the order of God's providence; he nowhere stops to tell us the "how." How God converted the Ninevites, how He sustained his life in the fish's belly, he tells not. He mentions only the great facts themselves, and leaves them in their mysterious greatness. *Pusey.*

The interest of the writer is mainly fastened upon the prophet's own personal history and feelings in relation to his mission and its consequences. The reader's attention is directed, not so much to the repentance of Nineveh, as to the spiritual schooling of Jonah himself. The dominant purpose of the book appears in fact to be a didactic one, having for its object to expose and rebuke in the person of Jonah the tendency to bigotry; to show to the members of the theocratic commonwealth, not only that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him," but also that Jehovah has a tender, compassionate care for every living man; and that as Israelites themselves have continually to own their indebtedness to the Divine forbearance and forgivingness, they ought to sympathize in, and be willing to help forward, the like mercy displayed to any of their fellow-men. And we are led to conclude that it is this didactic purpose which mainly constitutes its prophetic character, and explains the fact of its having found a place among the prophetic, and not in the historical books. The Jonah here portrayed, unamiable as he is, is, however, no other than the Elder Son in our Lord's parable, who "never at any time transgressed his father's commandment;" and as the character has in all ages been apt to reappear among God's people, it was an object worthy of Divine inspiration that it should be thus plainly and emphatically rebuked. The remarkable result has been, that no other part of the Old Testament displays in so lively a manner "the kindness of God toward man" (His *φιλανθρωπία*, Tit. 3: 4) without respect of persons, or so strikingly illustrates the affinity (*συγγειναι*, as Theodoret happily phrases it) existing between the Old and New Dispensations. B. C.

After Jonah, the whole body of prophets took up his parable, and taught in the very plainest way that Jehovah was the God of the Gentiles also. To us this truth seems taught everywhere in the Old Testament, but Jonah was the first to teach it plainly and directly to the Jews; and he taught it unwillingly. And yet he acknowledges that it was no new truth; for the reason which he gives for his refusal to bear God's message was that he understood in its fulness that proclamation of the Divine attributes made in Ex. 34: 6, 7, and knew, therefore, that there was pardon even for Nineveh, if it repented (Jonah 4: 2). R. P. S.

What one thing, indeed, could better have proved the world-calling of the covenant people than the mission of Jonah to the great As-

syrian capital on the banks of the Tigris? In this little book the current of history and prophecy meet and coalesce. It has been justly called "a foreign-missionary book in the midst of the Old Testament; a Divine anticipation of the breaking down of barriers in the announcement of salvation." Objecting to some parts of the story as fabulous does not explain the reason why such a story is told of the son of Amittai, a contemporary of the prophet Elisha. The fact of his inevitable and unalterable commission is but set in the stronger light by his reluctance to execute it. It was the Jew who resisted, the character that lacks no prominence in the sacred annals, even in those of the New Testament. It is the Israelite, the true son of Abraham, the man who has been lifted into the higher atmosphere of the national institutions, who finally yields and preaches the preaching that he is bidden. *E. C. Bissell.*

We have only to suppose the writer to have been Jonah himself, and then the whole composition assumes the character of a frank and self-humiliating confession; by the very act of penning it Jonah at once emerges out of his former character and appears to our view not only as a prophet, but as a remarkably humble and noble-spirited saint. For the self-humiliation of the penitent is made all the more striking, when he simply narrates the story of former folly and unworthiness, while he forbears all such expressions of self-disapproval as would tacitly serve as a justification of his present self. By writing as he has done, Jonah (supposing him to be the author) has exposed his character to the reprobation and even contempt of the great majority of his readers; gladly careless of what they would think of him, concerned only for the cause of God and His righteousness. B. C.—Here, then, is the key to the whole mystery of the character. Had Jonah never written the book we should say it would be hard to believe that he could have been a true prophet of God, and then it would be incredible that he could have been employed on such a mission. But his depth of repentance and faith is seen in the fact that he laid himself as a sacrifice on the altar of revelation. Hence the strange mixture in his conduct of the spirit of obedience and the spirit of selfishness. It is what is seen in the greatest saints—in David, in Simon Peter, in multitudes far below them; but the grace of God prevails over the infirmities and faults of a merely human character, and behind the distressing picture of inconsistency and moral weakness there

comes out the overpowering sufficiency of Divine strength, making the sinner into the servant of God—the man who fled from Jehovah's presence, His chosen witness. *Redford.*

The personal history of Jonah is brief and well known, but is of such an exceptional and extraordinary character as to have been set down by many German critics to fiction, either in whole or in part. The book, say they, was composed, or compounded, some time after the death of the prophet, perhaps at the latter part of the Jewish kingdom, during the reign of Josiah, or even later. The supposed improbabilities are accounted for by them in a variety of ways—*e.g.*, as merely fabulous or fanciful ornaments to a true history, or allegorical or parabolical and moral, both in their origin and design. We feel ourselves precluded from any doubt of the reality of the transactions recorded in this book by the simplicity of the language itself; by the accordance with other authorities of the historical and geographical notices; above all, by the explicit words and teaching of our blessed Lord Himself (Matt. 12: 39, 41; 16: 4; Luke 11: 29). We derive additional arguments for the same conclusion from the history and meaning of the prophet's mission. *Dic. B.*

In the case of Jonah, the miraculous element has, doubtless, had much to do with the persistent opposition to its authority. The whole of the modern critical school of Germany is actuated by a fierce hatred of the supernatural. Whatever cannot be brought under their *scientific canons* is to be rejected as mythical or fabulous. They must, however, explain the origin of the book which they attack. Generally speaking, their theories are as varied as their names. They are agreed only in the negations. When they attempt to build up, in a new form, that which they have destroyed, their weakness immediately reveals itself. Much of their so-called criticism is simply the application of an arbitrary standard to what they have failed to understand, and their want of sympathy with the higher intention of Scripture betrays itself in the shallow and unsatisfactory *suggestions* which they put forth, by way of removing difficulties and accounting for obstinate facts. *Redford.*

*Aramaic words.* The style is thought to bear traces of a "Chaldaizing element," due, it is supposed, to the influence exercised by Chaldaea upon the Hebrew language later in the Israelite history. The philological details on which this objection rests fail to substantiate it. Some of them are due to the fact that the writ-

er, describing for the first time in the Old Testament an ocean voyage, uses the proper technical terms which he heard employed on the occasion : such are *mullach*, " salt-sea man," for " sailor ;" *séphinah*, " covered"—i.e., " decked," for " vessel," the more common term *oniggyah* being also used ; *rabb hachobbel*, " chief of the sailors," for " captain ;" *vaygachtern* (most probably), " and they ploughed," for " rowed hard." We may recollect the parallel case of Luke, in his account of Paul's shipwreck, employing a variety of nautical terms, which he had no doubt heard used when himself on shipboard at the very time. Again, he uses the word *tuam* of the edict which was issued by the king and nobles ; not a Hebrew word, but Aramaic ; probably the very word used in Nineveh to designate such a decree. B.C.

That the book contains several Aramaisms—words, that is, akin to Syriac and Chaldee, but not belonging to pure Hebrew, proves nothing ; for scholars are not by any means agreed whether these Aramaisms belong or not to the declining age of Jewish literature, or whether they may not have been the vernacular dialect of the country people. R. P. S.

With regard to the words adduced by the critics against an early date for Jonah, the following is Dr. Pusey's summary of their evidence. " Out of these eight words or forms, three are naval terms, and, since Israel was no seafaring people, it is in harmony with the history that these terms should first occur in the first prophet who left the land on his mission by sea. So it is also that an Assyrian technical term should first occur in a prophet

who had been sent to Nineveh. A fifth word occurs in Hosea, a contemporary of Jonah, and in a Psalm of David. The abridged grammatical form was Phœnician, not Aramaic, was used in conversation, occurs in the oldest proper names, and in the northern tribes. The seventh and eighth do not occur in Aramaic in the meaning in which they are used by Jonah." The argument against the authenticity of the book on the ground of late forms in the language, therefore, entirely breaks down. Had it been composed after the time of the Captivity it would have been full of Chaldaisms, but, as it is, there is not one instance which can be made out.

To the Christian, who holds that *the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ* is above question, it will be an answer to all objections against the historical credibility of the Book of Jonah, that the use of it by the Saviour precludes the possibility of *His* regarding it in any other light than as an inspired work. Not only does He point to the facts of Jonah's preaching and the repentance of the people of Nineveh, but He solemnly declares that in the day of judgment these facts will be remembered. He also uses the miraculous element and connects it immediately with the greatest miracle of Christianity, *His own Resurrection*. Plainly, therefore, it was no spurious book in the eyes of the Jewish Church of the Lord's days ; and He Himself sanctioned the popular view of its Divine authority. To some minds this overwhelming argument from the Christian point of view will stand in the place of all others. Radford.

## JONAH, CHAPTERS I, II.

- 1 : 1, 2 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to 3 Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord ; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish ; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go 4 with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god ; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down 6 into the innermost parts of the ship ; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper ? arise, call upon thy God, if so be 7 that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast 8 lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose

- cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is  
 9 thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and  
 10 I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were  
 the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the  
 11 men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then said  
 they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea  
 12 grew more and more tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth  
 into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tem-  
 13 pest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they  
 14 could not: for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. Wherefore they  
 cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish  
 for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it  
 15 pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased  
 16 from her raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly: and they offered a sacrifice  
 17 unto the Lord, and made vows. And the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah;  
 2:1 and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed  
 2 unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. And he said,  
 I called by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord,  
 And he answered me;  
 Out of the belly of hell cried I,  
 And thou heardest my voice.  
 3 For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas,  
 And the flood was round about me;  
 All thy waves and thy billows passed over me.  
 4 And I said, I am cast out from before thine eyes;  
 Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.  
 5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul;  
 The deep was round about me;  
 The weeds were wrapped about my head.  
 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;  
 The earth with her bars *closed* upon me for ever:  
 Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.  
 7 When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord:  
 And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.  
 8 They that regard lying vanities  
 Forsake their own mercy.  
 9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;  
 I will pay that which I have vowed.  
 Salvation is of the Lord.  
 10 And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

ALL that is known of Jonah's origin is that he was the son of Amittai, of the village of Gath-hepher (in the tribe of Zebulun), about six miles northeast of Nazareth. From 2 K. 14: 25 we learn that he predicted the successes of Jeroboam II., the son of Joash of Israel. He must have uttered this prediction during the reign of Joash, probably soon after the death of Elisha. The story of his mission to Nineveh is the only other reference to Jonah. This brief Scripture of four chapters is a narrative rather than a prophecy. In this book Israel is not mentioned, though referred to in every other prophetic writing. Only Nineveh, a heathen city, is spoken of. And a chief purpose of the record, as well as of the Divine

mission it narrates, was to reprove and to warn the chosen people of God at a period of solemn crisis in their history. Here was a heathen people ready to hear and heed God's warning, at its first and only utterance by a stranger of a scorned race. But Israel, though often besought by God, for centuries distinguished by His peculiar favors, under circumstances of miraculous supply and deliverance, with multiplied agencies of instruction and guidance—Israel had long refused to heed God's call to repentance.

The strange character and conduct of the actor, the singular mixture of self-will and petulance with real consecration in the man's spirit, his effort to get away from God while

conscious of the futility of that effort, his prayerful submission and obedience after God's inflicted chastening, and his inconsistent repining at the repentance of the Ninevites, which he himself has urged upon them—all reveal Jonah as a paradox in character and conduct. But our Lord asserts the truth and expounds the meaning of the story. He tells us that the wonderful experience of Jonah was designed as a type of his own death and burial and resurrection. And He emphasizes the purpose of the record, already referred to, by applying to his own generation the lesson conveyed by the repentance of the Ninevites at the single preaching of so imperfect a man.

Coming after Elijah and Elisha, in comparison with their grandly effective lives, this prophet of Gath-hepher presents very little that is attractive. His fretful, repining spirit and boldness with God at the last, remind us of Elijah's one defection. And we must do him this justice, that he tells the story of his defection and his infirmities of spirit with the utmost frankness, and that he tells us nothing besides of all the good and true work God gave him to do. His history may have included many bright and happy obediences.

**Chaps. 1, 2.** From the first Divine bidding to go to Nineveh he flees in an opposite direction, thinking thus to escape from the spirit of prophecy (or *the presence of the Lord*), by going beyond the bounds of Israel. Not having enough of faith or courage or humility to comply with the prophetic impulses given him, he sought a strange and heathen locality that he might be freed from them. How God followed him, and set various miraculous agencies at work to check his self-willed flight, chastening him into reflection and return of prayerful, contrite spirit, and bringing him back to his own land, Jonah faithfully records in the first and second chapters. B.

**Chap. 1.** Jonah is commissioned to go to Nineveh and forewarn them of their destruction (verses 1, 2). He attempts to flee away to Spain instead (verse 3); a tempest from the Lord arrests the ship (verses 4-11); he is thrown overboard and caught up by a great fish (verses 11-17). H. C.

Who fails to see here a vivid display of the power, the justice, and the purpose of God? Every little detail—Jonah's flight and seeming security, the storm, the distress of the mariners, the casting of lots, the unavailing efforts to escape, the reluctant pitching into the sea, and the quiet that followed—concurs to heighten the picture of Jehovah's control of the winds

and the waves, of His power to rebuke and chastise under all circumstances, and of His inflexible purpose that grace shall be shown to the godless heathen of Nineveh. *Chambers.*

**2.** Nineveh, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, opposite the site of the modern Mosul, for many ages past in ruins, has been discovered and its ruins somewhat thoroughly explored in the present century. It was the capital of ancient Assyria, one of the oldest cities since the flood (Gen. 10: 11, 12), long celebrated for its size, wealth, and magnificence. At this time its wickedness had come up before God, and He mercifully sent to them a prophet from Israel to forewarn them of impending ruin and exhort them to repent. H. C.

The Jews were tempted to think of God as bound by a special covenant to one chosen race, and leaving the rest of the world to perish. Nothing could more signally rebuke such ignorance and prejudice as the mission of Jonah to Nineveh. Go and tell that people that there is a righteous God in heaven, who will by no means clear the guilty, whose eyes are in all the earth; but tell them also that what He is to His chosen, covenant people of Israel, He will be to all mankind—a God passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin to all those who truly repent and turn from their wickedness.

This universality of the religion of Israel is the substance of the message sent by Jonah, and it is sent through him to all nations and all times. The God who cares for Nineveh is the God who cares for the world. *Redford.*

**3.** Jonah resolved not to obey God's voice. What a glimpse into the prophetic office that gives us! The Divine Spirit could be resisted, and the prophet was no mere machine, but a living man, who had to consent with his devoted will to bear the burden of the Lord. One refused, and his refusal teaches us how superb and self-sacrificing was the faithfulness of the rest. So we have each to do with God's message entrusted to us. We must bow our wills, and sink our prejudices, and sacrifice our tastes, and say, "Here am I; send me." A. M.

**Joppa.** *Japho*, or *Joppa*, now Jaffa, or Yafa, has a continuous history in both sacred and profane story to the present, caused chiefly by its being the seaport of Jerusalem. In the monotonous line of coast, one elevated knoll rises about half way between the Desert and Carmel, covered with buildings, the solitary existing landing-place for Judea. Joppa has been often destroyed, but rebuilt after the same old fashion, with curious beehive-shaped little domes for roofs. Its houses still fill the extent of the



old walls, while a single gate opens on the road to Lydda, the first stage toward Jerusalem. *Tristram.*

It is now quite settled among critics that "Tarshish" was the city Tartessus, in Spain, with which the Phœnicians kept up an active trade by sea. Jonah thought to escape the responsibility of his unwelcome commission to Nineveh by taking ship at once to Tarshish. The narrative is particular to state repeatedly that this was "fleeing from the presence of the Lord"—as if there would be no God in Tarshish to make him trouble! or at least, as if God could not object to his laying down his prophetic office, and going abroad to foreign lands. H. C.

Jonah tried to get away from his conscience by starting for Tarshish instead of starting for Nineveh—that is, by doing something else instead of doing the one thing which he knew God required. Most of us have tried the same experiment. Jonah found that Jehovah has infinite resources, both natural and supernatural—in his case, the winds, the sea, the hearts of heathen sailors and of Jonah himself, the fall of the lot, the great fish—to prevent our thus escaping His call to duty. Other men have had the same experience. Jonah found, further, that Jehovah has also boundless resources—in this case, including the whole history and organization of the Assyrian empire—for helping one who, in His fear, attempts a discouraging duty. It would be well for us all to learn this lesson better. Jonah was reminded that it is not worth while to discredit what God says, for fear of injuring God's reputation. The book teaches that God is merciful, and accepts the repentant. For illustrating and enforcing these and other like truths, the Book of Jonah is peculiarly rich and edifying. We should not allow our attention to be diverted from these truths by discussion concerning other matters. W. J. B.

There is nothing to show that Jonah was constitutionally a coward. One would rather think, from his conduct at sea, that he was what the world might have called a fearless man. But he shrank from Divine duty. He was afraid of executing God's commission in Assyria for this reason, as he afterward explains it himself: "I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." Strange reason, indeed! showing that he was afraid of being disgraced in Nineveh by the denunciation he was to utter not being fulfilled; afraid lest

God should change His mind and leave His servant, as he fancied, covered with dishonor, and stigmatized as a false prophet. He could not trust himself and his reputation and influence to God. He was watchful over these, and afraid of these, as many people are; fearing to pursue the clear path of duty lest their credit should suffer, lest they should sink in human estimation. They have not courage to trust in God, therefore they trust in themselves; as though they fancied they were in better keeping when self-kept than when Divinely kept. *P. Fairbairn.*

Jonah represents the national feelings which he shared. Why did he refuse to go to Nineveh? Not because he was afraid of his life, or thought the task hopeless. He refused because he feared success. God's goodness was being stretched rather too far if it was going to take in Nineveh. Jonah grudged that heathen should share Israel's privileges, and probably thought that the gain to Nineveh would be loss to Israel. It was exactly the spirit of the prodigal's elder brother. There was also working in him the concern for his own reputation, which would be damaged if the threats he uttered turned out to be thunder without lightning, by reason of the repentance of Nineveh. A. M.

6. "Arise, call upon thy God!" And to think that a prophet of the Lord should be the only one in the company that could not, dared not, do this! Observe, there is no situation more pitiable than that of a religious man who has disabled himself to take the benefit of his religion. His associates had various gods; but they could all pray earnestly to their objects of adoration. He could not; *he*, who knew the real Lord of the land and the ocean. J. F.—This rousing call must have stung the sleeper, especially when, having fully awakened, he saw that God had met him in his guilty way, and had brought such peril upon others for his sake.

7. The "lot" was practically an appeal to God to decide a pending question by His providence. In this case the Lord took the disposal of the lot, according to Prov. 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." It put the finger of God upon Jonah. H. C.

8. That the shipmen do not at once act upon the result of the lot by throwing Jonah overboard, but set themselves first to search out the real circumstances of his case, exhibits in a very favorable light their fairness and humanity. Possibly, also, the gravity and decorum

which marked the prophet's demeanor had moved their respect. B. C.

**8-10.** The alarm felt by those sailors was greatly increased when Jonah told them that the God whom he feared and worshipped was that great God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. They could not help rebuking him. How couldst thou offend *such a God*? See what comes of it! Didst thou think to escape the wrath and the reach of so great a God? H. C.

**12.** *Cast me forth.* There can be no doubt that Jonah is here speaking under a prophetic impulse. That he should be thrown overboard and saved in a fish was the very course of things contemplated, as it should seem, by God in this part of Jonah's history; and it was the drawing of the Divine will working inwardly upon the prophet's soul, as well as his penitential and yet sublimely heroic self-surrender thereto, that led him to propose to the shipmen that they should dispose of him in this particular way rather than in any other. *I know.* He speaks as a prophet, both in confirming the strong surmise they had themselves formed, and also in promising that the sea should be calm to them when they were no longer burdened with his guilt. B. C.

Under God, and at the mouth of God, Jonah becomes judge in his own case; and he judges even in his own case with all the relentless righteousness which the sternest judge in any case could exhibit. No half measure, no compromise, no delay, no alternative; the one clear, immediate, complete, irrevocable, final doom: "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." Now, try and conceive of the height of true moral grandeur to which Jonah at this moment rises. He is clearly and consciously facing eternity; and he "fears God." He has been a regular, habitual fearer of God; and he truly fears God still. He has offended the Most High of late. He has fled from Him. At this very moment he has terrible experience of the power wherewith his Almighty God can prosecute an offence against His honor and bring the offender to punishment. Yet Jonah quails not; he denies not his own guilt. He denies not the Lord's righteousness. R. P. S.

Jonah's conduct in the storm is no less noble than his former conduct had been base. The burst of the tempest blew away all the fog from his mind, and he saw the stars again. His confession of faith; his calm conviction that he was the cause of the storm; his quiet, unhesitating command to throw him into the wild chaos foaming about the ship; his willing ac-

ceptance of death as the wages of his sin—all tell how true a saint he was in the depths of his soul. A. M.

Jonah stands there on the tossing deck, self-condemned indeed, but his whole attitude is noble. His fault has risen upon him at once in its full magnitude. He neither denies nor extenuates it; he confesses it fully, and he offers himself in atonement therefor. He betrays no unmanly terror in his own behalf, and displays a sweet concern for the saving of those upon whom he has brought great peril. There is something truly sublime in the figure which at this moment he presents to us as he stands among the mariners while the sea foam breaks around him—self-abased, yet noble with the dignity of a reawakened spiritual manhood—and calmly devotes himself to death: "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea. So shall the sea be calm for you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." No wonder that the sailors, profoundly touched by the act, struggled to the verge of hope ere they could find heart to sacrifice this man. *McCook.*

**13-16.** The behavior of the heathen sailors, or "salts," as the story calls them, is part of the lesson of the book; for, heathen as they are, they have yet a sense of dependence, and they pray; they are full of courage, battling with the storm, jettisoning the cargo, and doing everything possible to save the ship. Their treatment of Jonah is generous and chivalrous. Even when they hear his crime, and know that the storm is howling like a wild beast for him, they are unwilling to throw him overboard without one more effort; and when at last they do it, their prayer is for forgiveness, inasmuch as they are but carrying out the will of Jehovah. They are so much touched by the whole incident that they offer sacrifices to the God of the Hebrews, and are, in some sense, and possibly but for a time, worshippers of Him. All this holds the mirror up to Israel by showing how much of human kindness and generosity, and how much of susceptibility for the truth which Israel had to declare, lay in rude hearts beyond its pale. This crew of heathen of various nationalities and idols were yet men who could be kind to a renegade prophet, peril their lives to save his, and worship Jehovah. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," is the same lesson in another form. We may find abundant opportunities for learning it; for the characters of godless men, and of some among the heathen, may well shame many a Christian. A. M.

Surely the scene that followed is far too

touching and beautiful, too deeply significant and impressive, to be fiction. Only the inspiration of God could suggest such facts, and God would never inspire a mere fiction for a place in His word. "Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee." There is nothing in all fiction to compare with this. The influence of Jonah's lofty self-surrender had its effect, no doubt, on the men, and they were under the impression of the nearness of God and the solemnity of the crisis. "Those men, rowing hard, are preaching with every stroke the deepest Gospel they know—working up to their last energies on behalf of a fellow-creature in great and awful straits, and hoping that it may be the will of the Most High at length to favor their endeavor." Then it is very remarkable that they are led on to prayer—a very beautiful and suitable prayer—before they put themselves, as it were, in the hands of God by casting out Jonah into the deep. *Ridford*.

They did what they could. They were true to the best instincts of the human mind. They did not know God, and therefore could not call upon Him. They knew, however, that there was a Providence, and that there were powers—ruling powers—above men, laws and forces. They believed in gods, and to the gods they cried. Honor their honesty, while you deplore their ignorance; reverence their worship, while you turn away from the objects of it. *Ridgely*.

**17. The Lord prepared a great fish.** That is, literally, "assigned" or "appointed." So, farther on, "prepared a gourd," "prepared a worm," "prepared a sultry east wind." There is nothing to indicate that the great fish was or was not specially created for the occasion. The Jews were no naturalists, and were not familiar with the monsters of the deep; and the word does not imply "a whale" in the restricted sense in which we apply it. The Greeks used the word rendered "whale" in the Gospel for all great sea monsters, and included expressly sharks, dolphins and tunnies. The cavil about the small throat of the whale rendering the swallowing of a man impossible applies only to an incorrect rendering of modern versions. Sea monsters of such a size that they can swallow a man whole, and which can only swallow their prey whole, are found in the Mediterranean. The white shark, for in-

stance, which has simply cutting teeth, or incisors, has no choice between swallowing its prey whole or cutting off a portion. It cannot hold its prey or swallow it piecemeal. There are many instances on record of this shark having gulped down both living and dead men without mutilating them. Even a horse has been found whole in the stomach of one of these sharks. Müller, a most trustworthy naturalist, relates an instance which occurred in A.D. 1758, in the Mediterranean, of a sailor seized by a shark, which had him in its throat when the instant discharge of a gun struck it, and forced it to disgorge the man alive. The sailor afterward went about Europe exhibiting the monster from which he had been delivered. In 1877 one was washed ashore near Sidon which measured sixty feet in length. The spermaceti whale, which has also been found in the Mediterranean, has a throat capacious enough to receive a man. After all, the fact is to be accepted as an extraordinary intervention of Divine power, and as standing on the same footing as the other miracles of Scripture. *Tristram*.

The word which our Lord adopted from the Septuagint version, *ctox*, though now it gives its name to the whole class of *Utuca*, whales, dolphins, etc., was used by the ancients in a much wider sense, and Photius expressly classes under it the white shark, *Canis carcharias*, common in the Mediterranean. There is not the slightest doubt that this creature can swallow a man with ease. The miracle remains the same, that Jonah was preserved alive beneath the waters for the same length of time that our Lord lay in the grave—viz., one whole day and a small part of two others; but it does not involve the necessity of the creation of a fish specially for this purpose. R. P. S.

There was nothing miraculous in Jonah's being swallowed up, alive and whole, by a fish; but that he continued alive in the fish for three days and was then yielded up alive was altogether miraculous. It is indeed professedly as a miracle that the fact is exhibited to us in Scripture; our Lord repeatedly called it "the sign" (*i.e.*, the miracle) "of the prophet Jonah" (Matt 12:39; 16:4). The fact is, therefore, to be accepted as an extraordinary intervention of Divine power, and as standing on the same footing as the other miracles recorded in Scripture. It is not more difficult to believe than many others; not more difficult, for example, than the "sleep" and "awaking" of Lazarus. And its typological bearing may reasonably be regarded both as its *raison d'être* and as evidence of its special credibility.

Our Lord pointed to Jonah's entombment in the belly of the fish as furnishing a likeness to His being "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;" while He also repeatedly spoke in more general terms of the "sign of Jonah" being reproduced in His own person (Matt. 12:40; 16:4; Luke 11:30). To this Christ must also be supposed to have referred when, after His resurrection, He showed to His disciples that "thus it was written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise again the third day" (Luke 24:46); as likewise must Paul, when, as he was plainly wont to do, he taught that Christ "was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). For there is no other passage in the Old Testament Scriptures which could serve as a basis to this particular designation of time. It follows that Christ and His apostles were accustomed to point to Jonah's entombment in the fish, not merely as an occurrence to which His own entombment might be compared, but as a prediction so definite as to require to be verified by such fulfilment; so definite that it therefore "behooved Christ to rise again the third day." And this is an important fact for estimating this particular of Jonah's history. For we may in all reverence infer that this most strange and otherwise utterly unaccountable circumstance was ordered by Divine Providence for the very purpose of furnishing a typical prediction, in which both the Lord Jesus Himself (Luke 18:31, 33), and His Church as taught by Him, should recognize the distinct foreshadowing of His pre-ordained death and resurrection. Those who seriously believe in the vast significance for mankind of those great events, will find it reasonable to suppose that, if any events at all were to be typically foretold in the Old Testament, these should be; and, on the other hand, if this part of Jonah's history wears to our minds the aspect of being beyond all measure strange, we must consider that any typical representation of events in themselves so beyond all parallel marvellous could not fail, if viewed apart from such typical meaning, to wear just this very aspect. The all but consummated sacrifice of Isaac by his father is a piece of history which stands in this respect by the side of Jonah's three days' burial in the fish. Either narrative, if regarded by itself, shocks all the sense of probability; either, when regarded as typical, is seen to be in strict accordance with the main purpose of Divine revelation, which is the exhibition to the world of Christ. B. C.

Jesus used the Gospel to interpret the facts

occurring before the Gospel day. The literal incident of the raising of the serpent is to Him more than a historic fact. It is penetrated with a Gospel light to one standing in the new dispensation. So is the narrative of Jonah. No mere Jew saw the resurrection of the Lord in it, as did the Lord Himself, and as we all do now. And Paul flashes back his Christian sunlight on passage after passage of the Old Testament prophecy, which now to us has its Christian interpretation by his authority. The truth seems to be that certain great thoughts throb all through the Old Testament, and we are not only warranted in finding this great outline Gospel there, but we do not interpret correctly if we fail in seeing this on its pages. It is the life and spirit of the whole. The interpreter needs the spiritual as well as the inductive method. But when we see how broadly and along what large lines of great fact and incident Jesus uses this spiritual method, we shall be helped to avoid alike the mistake that makes every detail to carry an immense religious meaning, and that other extreme which sees only the literary history of coarse material events in the Old Testament. D. W. Fawcett.

In the discussion of the question of the historicity of the Book of Jonah, two seemingly grave and weighty objections have been urged against its genuineness: (1) The seeming lack of a sufficient reason for so unique a miracle; (2) the essential improbability of the instant, reverent heed of an entire people to the simple religious message of an unknown visitor from an enemy's country. In face of these arguments against the authenticity of the asserted miracle, it is well to ask if there is anything in the modern disclosures of Assyrian life and history that would seem to render the miraculous element in the story of Jonah more reasonable, and the marvellous effect of his preaching at Nineveh more explicable and natural.

Prominent among the divinities of ancient Assyria was Dagan, a creature, part man, part fish, and which, it is clear from the monuments, was an object of reverent worship. According to the various fragments of Berosus, preserved in later historical writers, the very beginning of civilization in Chaldea and Babylonia was under the direction of a personage, part man, part fish, who came up out of the sea. His language was articulate and human, and he instructed them in agriculture, in science and the arts. Berosus also records that, from time to time, ages apart, other beings of like nature with the first great teacher came up out of the sea with fresh instructions for man-

kind, and that each one of these orators or incarnations marked a new epoch, and the supernatural messengers bore a new name. Such beliefs being current among the Assyrians during all the period to which the Book of Jonah can be ascribed, there is an appreciable reasonableness, or logical consistency of movement, in the asserted miracle and the marvellous success of the fish-ejected Jonah in the Assyrian capital. He could have had no better heralding as a Divine messenger. It would certainly seem to be true that if God desired to impress upon all the people of Nineveh the authenticity of a message from Himself, while leaving to them the responsibility of personal choice as to obeying or disregarding His message, He could not have employed a fitter method than by sending that message to them in a way calculated to meet their most reverent and profound conceptions of a divinely authorized messenger. And this Divine concession, as it might be called, to the needs and aspirations of a people of limited religious training, would be in accordance with all that we know of God's way of working among men. II. C. T.

**Chap. 2.** The psalm in the second chapter, so far from subserving the ruling purpose of the book, would, on the supposition of the book being a parable, seem to be altogether in the way. It is, no doubt, as eminent critics—for example, Ewald and Bunsen—have pronounced it, a beautiful composition, taking rank in Hebrew poetry with the most perfectly conceived compositions in the Book of Psalms. But its finding a place here can only be explained by the supposition that Jonah had actually composed such a psalm, embodying his sentiments in connection with the situation referred to.

It appears unlikely that a real and eminent prophet, such as Jonah is otherwise known to have been, should gratuitously have been selected, whether by himself or by another, to be represented as so foolish, so wayward, so much out of harmony with the mind of God as he here appears, if he had not in fact so proved himself. It would have been a wanton sacrifice of a prophet's religious character, without a parallel. B. C.

Jonah's prayer, or rather thanksgiving, is founded upon the older psalms, especially those of David; and, as one critic observes, it is an excellent instance of the way in which the psalter should be used. For, while almost every phrase is taken from the Psalms, yet Jonah so adapts them to his own condition as to invest them with fresh liveliness and force.

Where David speaks of God hearing his voice from the Temple (Ps. 18 : 6), Jonah intensifies it: "Out of the belly of *sheol* [the grave] I cried, and Thou heardest my voice" (verse 2). Where David describes himself as cut off from before God's eyes (Ps. 31 : 23), Jonah said that he is "cast out" (verse 4). While David speaks of himself as compassed by the sorrows of death (Ps. 18 : 4), it is the waters which compass Jonah about; the depth that closes round him; the weeds that are tangled about his head (verse 5). And so throughout, till we reach the most touching point of all. David, conscious of his integrity, had declared that he hated those who regarded lying vanities—*i.e.*, idols (Ps. 31 : 6); Jonah, humbled by the thought of his own disobedience, meekly says that those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy, forsake the God in whom alone mercy is to be found (verse 8). It is, in short, the thanksgiving of one who knew those early psalms by heart, and had constantly employed them in God's worship; but he uses them with a vigor and power of adaptation to his own circumstances, and with the blending of so much that is original as to make them all new. It is no remoulding of old materials, but a new creation, fresh with living force, and the creation of a mind long used to find utterance for its emotions in the language of inspiration. Even then, at this early date, the sweet singer of Israel supplied the sacred words by which the deepest feelings of the soul in communion with God are alone able to find their proper utterance. R. P. S.

The prophet teaches us to use the psalms, as well as how the holy men of old used them. In that great moment of religious life, the well-remembered psalms, such as he had often used them, were brought to his mind. What had been figures to David or the sons of Korah, as, "The waters are come in, even unto my soul; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me," were strict realities to him. Yet only in this last sentence and in some other sentences, which doubtless had become a proverb of accepted prayer—"I cried out of my trouble unto the Lord, and He heard me"—does Jonah use exactly the words of earlier psalms. Elsewhere he varies or amplifies them, according to his own special circumstances. Thus, when David said, "The waters are come in, even unto my soul," Jonah substitutes the word which described best the condition from which God had delivered him, "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul." Where David said, "I am cut off from before Thine eyes,"

expressing an abiding condition, Jonah, who had for disobedience been cast into the sea, uses the strong word, "I am cast out from before Thine eyes." David says, "I said in my haste;" Jonah simply, "I said," for he had deserved it. David said, "When my spirit was overwhelmed," or "fainted within me," "Thou knewest my path;" Jonah substitutes, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord;" for when he rebelled he forgot Him. David said, "I hate them that observe lying vanities;" Jonah, who had himself disobeyed God, says mournfully, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy"—*i.e.*, their God, who is Mercy. Altogether, Jonah's thanksgiving is that of one whose mind was stored with the psalms which were part of the public worship, but it was the language of one who uses and recasts them freely, as he was taught of God, not of one who copies. No one verse is taken entirely from any psalm. There are original expressions everywhere. The words, "I went down to the cuttings off of the mountains;" "the seaweed bound around my head;" "the earth, its bars around me forever"—perhaps the coral reefs which run along all that shore—vividly exhibit him sinking, entangled, imprisoned, as it seems, inextricably. He goes on. We should expect some further description of his state; but he adds, in five simple words, "Thou broughtest up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God." Words somewhat like these last occur elsewhere: "Thou hast brought up my soul from hell" (Ps. 30: 3), agreeing in the one word "brought up." But the majesty of the prophet's conception is in the connection of the thoughts. The seaweed was bound round his head as his grave clothes; the solid bars of the deep-rooted earth were around him, and—God brought him up. At the close of the thanksgiving, "Salvation is the Lord's," the deliverance is completed; as though God had only waited for this act of complete faith. So could no one have written who had not himself been delivered from such an extreme point of drowning as man could not, of himself, escape from. . . . What in it is most descriptive of Jonah's situation, as binding of the seaweed around the head, the sinking down to the roots of the mountains, the bars of the earth around him, are peculiar to this thanksgiving of Jonah; they do not occur elsewhere, for, except through miracle, they would be images not of peril, but of death. *Pusey.*

9. Precisely what his vows were in his trouble he has not said. Doubtless he prom-

ised the Lord never again to try to flee from His presence to avoid an unwelcome duty. He closes with this most expressive, glorious testimony: "Salvation is of the Lord." He and He only can save in times of trouble. H. C.

10. "And Jehovah spake to the fish, and He cast forth Jonah upon the dry land"—that is to say, Jehovah answered the prayer which the prophet put forth by speaking to the fish. "The dry land" would probably be the coast somewhere in the neighborhood of Joppa, so that the prophet would, without any difficulty and no great delay, return to his own home. *Redford.*

In the Christian life there are three impossible things: First, to escape trouble by running away from duty. Jonah once made the experiment, but soon found himself where all his imitators will, in the end, find themselves. Therefore, manfully meet and overcome the difficulties and trials to which the post assigned you by God's providence exposes you. Second, to become a Christian of strength and maturity without undergoing severe trials. What fire is to gold, that is affliction to the believer. It burns up the dross and makes the gold shine forth with unalloyed lustre. Third, to form an independent character except when thrown upon our own resources. The oak in the middle of the forest, which is surrounded on every side by trees that shelter and shade it, runs up tall and sickly; put it away from its protectors, and the first blast will overturn it. But the same tree, growing in the open field, where it is continually beat upon by the tempest, becomes its own protector. So the man who is compelled to rely on his own resources forms an independence of character which he could not otherwise have attained. *Anon.*

Jonah's character was defective rather than corrupt. Like the Apostle Peter, he needed a great deal of teaching, but the root of his piety was sound and deep. He puts himself at once in the hands of the chastising Jehovah. He sees his error and how great it is, and is ready to leave himself to the merciful disposition of Jehovah, just as David did, while doubtless at the same time praying for deliverance. His faith, though mixed with unbelief, was real and deep, and the Lord rewarded it by delivering him from all his fears, and lifting him up to the height of his vocation as the messenger of love to the world. *Redford.*

In Jonah's prayer we see the revival of faith. He emerged from the shades of unbelief; he remembered God. The faith which had sunk

under the burden of duty rose under the pressure of affliction. Faith to act is easier than faith to suffer. Patiently to bear is harder than actively to obey. Yet Jonah by faith endures, though he had not by faith performed the will of God. He had failed in the easier—he succeeds in the more difficult. Natural terror in his circumstances might have led him to pray, might have led him bitterly to cry in his distress; but something more than nature must there have been to inspire him with hope as he lay locked within that living dungeon, to produce in him that calm confidence which comes out in the words, “I will look again toward Thy holy temple.” It was as though he had brought to mind the intercession of King Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. *Stoughton.*

The calm submission of Jonah, and his instant recognition of the hand of God, plainly indicate a mind intensely alive to moral truth, and ready at once to sacrifice self to the declared will of God. We cannot, therefore, for one moment entertain the idea that Jonah was an apostate in any sense of the word. When the prophet himself was summoned to avert from that great enemy of Israel the anger of God, the effect upon his mind was to produce a conflict between patriotic feeling and conscience, which he could not silence. The conflict was quite natural; but the grievous mistake was, that Jonah listened to his own thoughts instead of to the voice of Jehovah. He reasoned that if Nineveh should be destroyed a great danger would be removed from the prospects of his own country, a great op-

pressor of humanity would be justly punished, and the Divine righteousness would be exemplified. If he went and preached to the cruel city, the probability was the punishment would be remitted, and after a time the Ninevites would fall back into their old state of violence. But what had a prophet to do with such calculations? The question for him to ask was simply: “What am I commanded to say and to do?” It was a confusion in his mind of the political and the religious, which in such a man was inexcusable. He was lacking in faith, in enlightenment, in moral courage, in simplicity of trust in God, in broad sympathy with mankind and interest in the welfare of souls; but he was not an apostate, and had no intention of ultimately rejecting the commands of God. Hence he was entirely brought back to implicit obedience by miraculous preservation, which plainly said to him, “Thou art the chosen servant of God; even against thine own will thou shalt be the Divine messenger; spite of thy fears thou shalt be strong, and shalt be a sign unto all the world of the grace of God.” On the whole, in the flight of Jonah we trace the main feature of his character. He was a true prophet, a man of God, a devout man, waiting for the word of God, but he leaned too much upon his own understanding, and was lacking in faith. The purpose of the book is to show how such a character, with its infirmity and narrowness and proneness to error, is led by the gracious discipline and interposition of Jehovah from the position of a mere Israelitish prophet to that of the messenger of a universal love to the world. *Redford.*

### JONAH, CHAPTER III.

**3:1, 2** AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go  
 3 unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah  
 4 arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an  
 5 exceeding great city, of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's  
 6 journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And  
 7 the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from  
 8 the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh,  
 9 and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and  
 10 sat in ashes. And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the  
 11 king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them  
 12 not feed, nor drink water: but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and  
 13 let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from  
 14 the violence that is in their hands. Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent,

and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

**Chap. 3.** Commanded a second time, Jonah goes to Nineveh and proclaims its approaching ruin. The people and their king humble themselves and repent before God; He turns from His purpose and spares the city. H. C.

**1-3.** *Jonah obeys the second commission to go to Nineveh.* From Gath-hepher the distance to Nineveh exceeded five hundred miles. Nineveh was (as hinted by the Hebrew superlative here used, "great to God," or divinely great) the largest city of the world, and was the capital of the mightiest empire then existing, the Assyrian. This empire existed from 1500 to 600 before Christ. In its flourishing state, Nineveh was greater than Babylon. Its walls were a hundred feet high and of great breadth, having fifteen hundred towers each two hundred feet high. The compass of the enclosed city was sixty miles, or three days' journey. Great heaps of ruins at vast distances apart lie within the quadrilateral wall, which "may still be recognized, marked by a series of mounds in a regular line scattered over the plain."

The mission of Jonah had two other beneficent purposes beside that of impressively warning Israel. God meant to bless the Ninevites themselves. Christ says, not only that Jonah's strange experience was a sign or type of His own, but that through his experience Jonah was a *sign unto the Ninevites*. His experience of God's judgment in his temporary burial, and of God's mercy in his resurrection, specially qualified him to preach judgment and mercy. His own story of disobedience and punishment, told to the Ninevites, was a *sign* or *embodied lesson* to them. A still further purpose of God's mercy now offered to the chief city, and therefore the representative of the Gentile world, was to convey a prophetic intimation of His future calling of the Gentiles, the offering of Christ and His accomplished redemption to all nations. B.

**1.** *The second time.* It is clear, from the fourth chapter, that Jonah's inward feeling still revolted against the spirit of his message, as aiming at the good of the Ninevites; and so far the prophet was still wrong. But, on the other hand, his waiting for the renewal of the commission, before proceeding to execute it, was the dictate of a just humility. If, after the rebuke which he had incurred, he had gone forth at once as Jehovah's messenger, as if he had done nothing to forfeit his high function,

his conduct might have savored of presumption rather than of obedience. B. C.

We are not told when the second time was, but probably it was not long after the miracle. Weeks, possibly months, might elapse. But Jonah's deliverance was, meanwhile, being proclaimed—certainly in his own country, probably elsewhere. The seamen might speak of it where they went. The miracle was assuredly a new revelation to the *prophet*. He was now better prepared for his mission. He might have been rejected. The new call was a sign of forgiveness and acceptance. *Redford.*

**2.** Jonah was not only to go as commanded, but he is specially charged to preach to that great and proud city what God should bid him preach—a charge certainly full of suggestions to all who are ever called of God to preach in His name. What have they to do to preach out of their own heart, to subserve some supposed interest of their own, other than that for which God sends them? H. C.

"Go, and preach," says God, "the preaching that I bid thee"—that is, (1) "the preaching that I did bid thee when I first ordered thee to go thither; go and cry against it, denounce Divine judgments against it; tell the men of Nineveh that their wickedness is come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them." Or (2), "The preaching that I shall bid thee, when thou comest thither." This was an encouragement to him in his undertaking, that God would go along with him, that the Spirit of prophecy should abide upon him and be ready upon him, when he was at Nineveh, to give him all the further instructions that were needful for him. H.

The more simply he repeats the stern, plain, short message, the more likely it is to impress. God's word, faithfully set forth, will prove itself. The preacher or teacher of this day has substantially the same charge as Jonah had; and the more he suppresses himself and becomes but a voice through which God speaks, the better for himself, his hearers and his work.

Speak it as if it were what it is—the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. Speak it as if you were what you are, neither its inventors nor its discoverers, but only its messengers, who have but to "preach the preaching which He bids" you. And to all the widespread questionings of this day, filmy and air-filling as the gossamers of an autumn even-



ing, to all the theories of speculation, and all the panaceas of unbelieving philanthropy, present the solid certainties of our inmost experience, the yet more solid certainty of that all-loving name and all-sufficient work on which these repose. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come." Then our proclamation, "This is the true God and eternal life," will not be in vain; and our loving entreaty, "Keep yourselves from idols," will be heard and yielded to in many a land. A. M.

3. The principal utterances respecting Assyria, and Nineveh, its capital, are found in the narrative and prophecy of Jonah, whose connection with Nineveh is still commemorated in the name given to one of the mounds opposite Mosul, *Nebbi Yonius* (the tomb of the prophet Jonah). It is from this narrative that we derive the historical description of the size of Nineveh—viz., as a city of three days' journey, and the notice respecting its population. H. W. Philpot.

The most probable sense is that which, from the days of Jerome, has been generally given it—viz., a city of three days' journey in circuit. This agrees with the notion of enormous size suggested by the preceding words, "a city great unto God." We have a further notice of its magnitude in chap. 4: 11, "wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," which affords ground for estimating the whole population at some seven hundred thousand; while the additional specification, "and much cattle," points to there being within the circuit of the city large space for their keep. B. C.

Layard says ("Nineveh and its Remains," p. 195): "If we take the four great mounds of Nimroud, Kouyunjik, Khorsabad and Karamles as the corners of a square, it will be found that its four sides correspond pretty accurately with the four hundred and eighty stadia, or sixty miles, of the geographer." Investigations made upon the site of the ruined city confirm, in the most remarkable manner, the statement of Gen. 10: 11, 12, that "the great city" was made up of the aggregation of four places originally distinct—Nineveh, Ir Rehoboth, Calah and Resen. Nineveh, in the narrower sense, was but one quarter or district of what came to be called Nineveh in its larger sense; just as the city proper is but a small part of what now goes under the name of London. S. S. T.

4. *A day's journey.* One day's journey.

Not, perhaps, going straight on, but moving about among the more frequented streets, the market-places, or other places of concourse to be found among the scattered population. Before he could finish one day's journey, the impression made by his words among the people was so great, that he had no need to go farther. B. C.—In this great city Jonah went one day's journey, a distance of twenty miles, repeating his single text, that after a respite of forty days Nineveh would be destroyed. He may have uttered his cry for many days consecutively, till his voice had reached all parts; or rumor may have carried his words whither he had not penetrated himself. The narrative does not dwell upon this, but tells us that within the stipulated time Nineveh had repented, and that its heathen people found grace and mercy. R. P. S.

*The substance of Jonah's preaching.* Into the vast city Jonah journeyed for a single day, preaching as he went to the accumulating crowds. His text only is given us: "Nineveh shall be overthrown after forty days!" Of Jehovah, the true God, of His power and holiness, of His justice and grace, we know that He spake. But his words were warning words. He uttered no direct promise, and gave no special assurance to the people of Nineveh. He spoke only of the punishment that would follow their guilt, while he simply acquainted them with the great compassion and mercy of God. Only in the illustration of God's mercy by his own marvellous story of deliverance, he gave them ground to infer that they too might be forgiven and saved from destruction. And they, wiser than the people of Israel, upon whom mercies and promises and warnings had been continuously showered for centuries, heeded the warning, instantly accepted and acted upon the inference. B.

There is an element of threatening in God's most merciful message, and that the appeal to terror and to the desire for self-preservation is part of the way to preach the Gospel. Plain warnings of coming evil may be spoken tenderly, and reveal love as truly as the most soothing words. The warning comes in time. "Forty days" of grace are granted. The Gospel warns us in time enough for escape. It warns us because God loves; and they are as untrue messengers of His love as of His justice who slur over the declaration of His wrath. A. M.

We are not told that he used the miracle of his own deliverance as a credential of his mission, but we must admit that it is at least *pos-*

sible that he did so ; nor is there any great *improbability* in the supposition that the fame of that miracle preceded him at Nineveh, and that it became the common accepted sign which God sent to the whole Semitic family of peoples about that time. And it must not be forgotten that the miracle is quite in harmony with the course of revelation, with those that had preceded it in Israel, and with the spirit of the time. Coming soon after the ministry both of Elisha and of Elijah, and being first sent to the same part of Palestine, it seems quite fitting that such a work should be wrought. The miracles of Elisha were of a wider scope than those which had hitherto been sent among the people. So this miracle is more adapted to strike the minds of the heathen than if it had been performed strictly within the limits of the chosen race. *Relford.*

There is no more striking proof of the moral grandeur of the religion of Jehovah than this mission of a solitary prophet from the petty kingdom of Israel to warn the great monarch of Western Asia that he and his city should perish unless they repented before God. P. S.

**5-9.** *How the people of Nineveh responded to the warning message of Jonah.* They received it as the warning of God. Led and directed by their king, to whom the words of Jonah were reported, they united in a national act of humiliation and confession before God. They abstained utterly from food and drink, from all toil and pleasure. From the monarch to the slave, they exchanged their customary garments for the rough and unseemly covering of goat's-hair cloth, as a fitting token of their inward self-mortification. To deepen the visible impression, even the animals that were used to splendid trappings were covered with the same emblem of humiliation and grief. Nor was this outward demonstration all ; else had no result of mercy followed. To fasting and sackcloth king and people added importunate entreaty to Jehovah, and a "turning every one from his evil way." Their natural conscience and the prophet's teaching told them that the heart must be humbled, and its evil confessed, deplored and forsaken ; that the heart must be cleansed and forgiven ; that the heart must be turned with trust and desire to God, must seek and hope in His mercy. That they understood all this, though dimly, appears from the touching question which concludes the royal decree : "Who can tell but that God will turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not ?" There is faith in this question, joined as it is with their previous humiliation, prayer and

turning from evil. God had shown His disposition to save by sending one to warn them. Surely He would have mercy if they heeded and rightly improved His message. And their heart *was* humbled, its evil confessed and forsaken, before God. Christ assures us (Luke 11 : 32) that "they repented at the preaching of Jonah." And He applies the fact as a most impressive warning to the Jews He was addressing. B.

**5.** *Believed in God.* The phrase being the same as in Gen. 15 : 6. There is a certain pathos in the choice of the expression "believed in God," rather than "believed what Jonah said." It seems to betoken admiration for the simplicity of their faith, not without oblique reference to Israel's unbelief. B. C.

God sent many prophets to Israel, and those well known among them to be mighty in word and deed ; but to Nineveh he sent only one, and him a stranger ; and yet they repented, but Israel repented not. Jonah preached but one sermon, and we do not find that he gave them any sign or wonder by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed ; and yet they were wrought upon, while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words wherewith to reason with them, and confirmed them by signs following. Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin, and yet they repented ; but Israel persisted in impenitence, though the prophets sent to them drew them with cords of a man and with bands of love, and assured them of great things which God would do for them if they did repent and reform. II.

The change wrought will better be comprehended if we bear in mind the great susceptibility of Oriental races to emotion, the awe of one Supreme Being which is peculiar to all the heathen religions of Asia, and the great esteem in which soothsaying and oracles were held in Assyria from the earliest times. The appearance of a foreigner, who, without any conceivable personal interest, and with the most fearless boldness, disclosed to the great royal city its godless ways, and announced its destruction within a very short period with the confidence so characteristic of the God-sent prophets, could not fail to make a powerful impression upon the minds of the people, and this would be all the stronger if the report of the miraculous working of Israel had penetrated to Nineveh. *Keil.*

**6.** It does not appear that the king heard from Jonah's own lips ; but the word came to him through his servants. They testified to the

deep, pervading conviction of the people, and the king at once believed God as his people had done. This record of him may well rebuke many an ungodly monarch who plants his foot upon the very idea of "a higher law of God," and scornfully repels all authority higher than the mandates of his own will.

8. *Nor beast.* It strikes our minds as a piece of barbaric enthusiasm, showing, however, its passionate intensity, that the decree associates with the self-affliction of man the compulsory affliction also of all such animals as stood in close connection with man; but, like the mention in the next verse of sack-cloth being put upon man *and beast*, it is a feature more likely to have been introduced into the narrative because of its being true to fact, than to have been merely invented by a writer of fiction. In reference to the beasts which are here alluded to, probably those animals only are contemplated which were wont to wear harness, such as horses, asses, mules, camels and draught oxen. In all ages men have been wont, on occasion, to put upon such animals trappings suited to the particular season, whether in rejoicings, or (as among ourselves) at funerals. B. C.

It is important to notice that the command to put sack-cloth on their beasts and flocks, and make them fast, is a strong argument for the authenticity of the book. No such custom existed among the Jews; but it was a heathen practice. When Alexander had become barbarized, he commanded the horses and mules to be shorn as mourning for the death of Hephaestion; and Herodotus tells us that the Persians bewailed the death of Masistius in a similar way. R. P. S.

The proclamation also specially enjoins on all men to "turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands." So manifest is it that the law of justice and right is everywhere in the human mind, and that no heathen can be so blind as not to see it. This also is a stinging rebuke to men, who, under far clearer light than theirs, yet labor to extinguish this light, or, in the more fit and expressive words of revelation, "put darkness for light and light for darkness."

9. The form of this question suggests that the king of Nineveh did not *know* that God would always forgive a penitent people. He had heard less of God than we have. But he could say, "Who can tell" (literally, "who knows") "whether He will turn and repent, that we perish not?" On this assumed possibility he bases his call to humiliation, fasting, prayer and reform. H. C.

The description of the *repentance of Nineveh* has all the traits of truthfulness in it. It is just such a proclamation as Assyrians would make, bearing the marks of Eastern despotism and extravagance. And yet there is no attempt to represent the change as anything else than it was—repentance for the sake of averting Divine wrath. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Had it been the main object of the writer to present the heathen in a favorable point of view, one would have expected much more to be said about Nineveh and its adoption of Jonah's religion. We are left to conclude that while Divine wrath was averted, yet it was more because God had pity on the great city than because they were converted from heathenism to anything like an acceptance of the Jewish faith. So in the whole book there is no attempt to paint up a narrative with historical exactness, as there would be in a fiction, because the spiritual intention of the book is uppermost in the prophet's thoughts. There is enough of history to give the air of truthfulness to the narrative, and yet not enough to divert attention from the main substance of the whole, which was the prophet's mission, and God's revelation of Himself and His purpose through him. *Redford.*

They know not the issue, yet they neglect not repentance. They are unacquainted with the method of the loving-kindness of God, and they are changed amid uncertainty. They had no other Ninevites to look to, who had repented and been saved. They had not read the prophets nor heard the patriarchs, nor benefited by counsel, nor partaken of instruction, nor had they persuaded themselves that they should altogether propitiate God by repentance. For the threat did not contain this. But they doubted and hesitated about this, and yet repented with all carefulness. What account then shall we give, when these, who had no good hope held out to them as to the issue, gave evidence of such a change, and thou, who mayest be of good cheer as to God's love for men, and hast many times received many pledges of His care, and hast heard the prophets and apostles, and hast been instructed by the events themselves, strivest not to attain the same measure of virtue as they. *Chrysostom.*

Our Lord said, Matt. 12: 41: "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." The example of the Ninevites could only serve to

abash impenitent Jews on the supposition that they were real persons, who really acted in the way described. It is plain that our Lord felt the repentance of Nineveh to be a piece of true history, and as standing in this respect on the same footing as the journey of the queen of the south, referred to immediately after. But if the repentance of the Ninevites was an actual fact, the other occurrences related in the same book must be understood as being of the same character; for there is not a shadow of reason for supposing that the repentance of Nineveh was known to the Jews of our Lord's time through any other channel of information; and, therefore, if it was to be believed that the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah because the Book of Jonah affirms it, the same reason requires it to be also believed that Jonah actually went through all that experience which the book records. From the use which our Lord made of this particular part, we may certainly infer that He Himself regarded those other portions, to which He referred, as likewise strictly historical. II. C.

**10.** *The result of their faith and repentance.* The same that follows all genuine repentance and reformation toward God. The threatened evil of destruction was withheld. *Their repentance changed, not the principles or purposes of God, but His actual dealings.* God's acts must change when His principles of action, which are immutable, require the change. The word *repent*, as applied to God, refers solely to His change of act consequent upon men's change of heart. Here the removal of the threatened judgments was only the carrying out of His principles, which have ever been to show mercy and give deliverance to the humble and contrite. Let it be always carefully noted that *God's promises and threatenings* are based upon the principles of mercy and judgment which govern His dealing with men. They are always and necessarily conditional upon men's treatment of them. The promises are fulfilled and the threatenings withheld when men repent and believe; while the promises are annulled and the threatenings fulfilled when men remain unrepentant and unbelieving. B.

"God saw," not their professions, nor merely their prayers, but "their works, that they turned from their evil way." Of course, when they changed their moral attitude before Him, He changed His plan; turned from His purpose and spared the city. So He always deals with the nations of the earth. Works meet for repentance will infallibly secure the reversal of threatened and impending doom. God's

immutability is that of principle, not of plan and action. He immutably hates and punishes sin; hence, when a sinner becomes a penitent, God turns from threatened vengeance to free pardon. II. C.

This is ever God's manner, when men change their deeds to change His doom; when they renounce their sins to recall His sentence; when they repent of the evil they have done against Him, to "repent of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them." Search the Scriptures, and say if things run not thus as in the most ordinary course: God commandeth and man disobeyeth; man disobeyeth and God threateneth; God threateneth and man repenteth; man repenteth and God forbeareth. Nineveh, prepare for desolation; for now but "forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" but Nineveh fasted, and prayed and repented; and Nineveh stood after more than twice forty years. Generally God never yet threatened any punishment upon person or place, but if they repented He either withheld it, or deferred it, or abated it, or sweetened it to them; for the most part proportionably to the truth and measure of their repentance, but always, so far as in His infinite wisdom He hath thought good, He hath remitted somewhat of the threatened severity and rigor. *Bp. Sanderson.*

Among men, a good father, a just master, will treat son or servant according to their works and their state. When they wickedly transgress he is grieved and angry. When they repent and reform he is glad and pleased. Such a man is not called fickle and changeable in nature on account of those changing states. Because he has integrity and love in his nature as unchanging principles, therefore, as the ever-varying facts and scenes of life arise and pass before him, as the different acts and moral states of men are perceived, there are emotions corresponding with them excited in his mind. And are we to suppose that what constitutes a special perfection in the moral character of a man is an imperfection in God? Surely not. His mind is the one perfect mirror, reflecting, without the least distortion or refraction, every object, act, state, being, in the universe, just as it is. This is the heart and core of what we are now saying—that God morally regards us at any one moment *just as we are*. If we repent of all sin and grow into all goodness, His thought and feeling will rise with us; and as, repenting, He spared Nineveh, so He will spare us, and we shall live and not die. *Ruthigh.*

So we might almost say that the purpose of

this Book of Jonah is to teach the possibility and efficacy of repentance, and to show how the penitent man, heathen or Jew, ever finds in God changed dealings corresponding to his changed heart. The widest charity, the humbling lesson for people brought up in the blaze of revelation, that dwellers in the twilight or in the darkness are dear to God and may be more susceptible of Divine impressions than ourselves, the rebuke of all pluming ourselves on our privileges, the boundlessness of God's mercy, are among the other lessons of this strange book; but none of them is more precious than its truly evangelic teaching of the blessedness of true penitence, whether exemplified in the renegade prophet returning to his high mission, or in the fierce Ninevites humbled and repentant, and finding mercy from the God of the whole earth. A. M.

As to the point that there is no confirmation of such a change in the *evidence of history*, it is met by the fact that *as yet* we are quite unable to speak, with any degree of confidence, on *details* of Assyrian history. Moreover, as is well said by Prebendary Huxtable (in "The Speaker's [Bible] Commentary"): "We need not be disappointed or staggered if no traces of the event be found. The staple subjects of the inscriptions, so far as they have hitherto been deciphered, are campaigns, conquests, sieges, building of palaces and the like; matters of barbaric interest, in which a merely moral or religious element is not to be looked for." We may also lay some stress on the analogy which Prebendary Huxtable refers to: "That an outward profession of national repentance was treated by Jehovah as a ground for remitting the threatened overthrow, notwithstanding that it was both superficial and short-lived (cf. 1 K. 21: 27-29), was in accordance with the pedagogic character of the old dispensation, wherein external shows were very commonly made use of to represent in vivid symbol the actings of God's justice and mercy, and thus to draw men on to that true spiritual repentance which it is the object of all Divine revelation to bring about."

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with us" that a heathen city should understand enough of the Divine character to believe that if they turned from their evil ways and cried out to Heaven for mercy, the threatened destruction would be averted? That such a fact should be put into God's Book is itself a sufficient reason for the whole history. It has helped to produce repentance in many minds. It remained age after age both as a witness to

Divine forbearance, and as a warning to those to whom the Word of God came, lest "they who repented at the preaching of Jonah should rise up in the judgment and condemn them."

The conversion of Nineveh, or rather the temporary reformation of the people and their rulers, was a great sign. It had an incalculable spiritual worth at that period. It coincided in time with the commencement of written prophecy. It gave the keynote to all the subsequent messages to Judah and Israel, and through them to the world. Is there anything improbable in miracles being included in the striking of that keynote? Was it not the case that at each important new departure in the history of revelation there were miracles? Miracles attended the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Miracles surrounded the people in their settlement in the promised land. Miracles characterized the ministry of the two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, who were pre-eminently the rebukers of idolatry and the restorers of the broken covenant. And when prophecy, during the latter part of the ninth century before Christ, came forth afresh, in a new form, as a direct appeal to the degenerate tribes of Israel, to fulfil their function as the witnesses of Jehovah to the world, when it commenced a succession of inspired messages which should be preserved to all generations as the voice of God to His people, what would be more in harmony with the whole method of revelation than such a narrative as that of Jonah, in which Divine sovereignty and grace were set forth with unmistakable distinctness and emphasis? *Redford*.

We see here the Divine Agape crossing the borders of Israel and offering salvation to "the ends of the earth." This is an early voicing of the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It anticipates the adoption of the Gentiles; it declares that the minister of God is a messenger of compassion to all men, and that the Church of God is a "holy catholic Church." It sounds the note of Christian missions far down the ages, and lays deep in the very character and commands of God that noble zeal for evangelizing the world which in these latter days so largely possesses the Church. *McCook*.

The whole history of Jonah teaches—the book itself seems placed in the canon of Scripture to teach: 1. That from the earliest ages all races of men have been beneath God's loving care, and that true repentance will always and everywhere be met by forgiveness. Jonah,

the *first* of the prophets, was charged with this distinct lesson. The Jews of his own day greatly needed it, and we recognize it now as a prophecy and pledge of that larger mercy which in our day is offering the Gospel to all the nations of heathendom. 2. We see also the *method* of God's mercy to the heathen. It is to send them living missionaries. The "word of the Lord" is not now to Jonah alone; it is to all the Church. And it is not, "Arise, go unto Nineveh;" it is, "Go ye and teach all nations." 3. The history illustrates the great expectations which we may rightly cherish concerning the hardest fields of the heathen world. 4. We are instructed also in the religious use of fear. Its work is only preparatory, but it is often indispensable. Neither Jonah nor Nineveh would ever have done their duty if it had not been for God's red-hot coals of fear. Yet even their fear brought hope. If God had mercy to warn them, they well argued that He might have mercy to spare them should they repent. 5. Read also in the record of Nineveh's repentance the moral power of leaders, whether social or political. It was the example, the call, of the king and his nobles which hastened, extended and confirmed the repentance of the people. The humiliation, the prayer was made national, and God in answer gave mercies of national extent. 6. And, last of all, let us learn Christ's own lessons from this history: "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:32). Christ teaches in these words:

1. The survival of the soul. Nineveh has been in ruins for two thousand years, but "the men of Nineveh," after the lapse of centuries, are still alive.

2. The prospect of a general judgment. In that last great court the men of the most widely separated ages shall meet face to face.

3. The Saviour's standard of guilt. The guiltiest nations are those that have had the most abundant light, but have refused to turn from their national sins. It is the same with individuals. The deepest perdition is for those souls who have been warned and besought by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but have refused to believe God, to repent and pray. Consider the contrast between the privileges of the men of Nineveh and ours. They could say no more than this: "Who can tell?" They repented on a *bare chance* of mercy. We have all God's promises, His invitations, His persuasions, His holy oath, His sure and celestial rewards. To us the messenger is God's own Son, and the arguments of that messenger are His own love and blood and tears. *Arthur Mitchell.*

*Other personal truths.* 1. As God did with Jonah, He continues to do with imperfect disciples. In our disobedience, from wilfulness or prejudice or a fretful, repining spirit, He will in some way pursue us with kind chastening. And when the chastening has had its intended effect of submission, He will try us again on the points of previous failure or neglect. He will give us the opportunity to take up the work which we once declined, or from which we shrank. So He will restore our faith and strength and courage. 2. There is a limited period to God's forbearance with every human soul. While the warning is *heard*, while the *least* sensibility remains, that solemn limit is not yet reached. But as sensibility becomes impaired, the soul more and more swiftly reaches that fearful limit which the Holy Ghost vividly describes in the words: *past feeling!* B.

## JONAH, CHAPTER IV.

4:1, 2 BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee unto Tarsish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest thee of the evil. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die 4, 5 than to live. And the Lord said, Doest thou well to be angry? Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in 6 the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared

a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd. But God prepared a worm which the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death. And the Lord said, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

**Chap. 4.** This chapter is a mournful record of the moral frailties of a good man, and a glorious testimony to the pity, forbearance and love of the blessed God. Jonah is greatly displeased because the Lord reversed the predicted fall of Nineveh; he waits outside the city to see what the Lord would do to it; he put up a rude tent for shelter from the heat; and the Lord brought up a gourd over him for his further relief; but a worm destroys the gourd. Jonah is again fretful, impatient and angry, and the Lord very gently rebukes him, and gives reasons for sparing Nineveh. H. C.

1. Jonah shows himself in his behavior so extremely wayward, that it is perfectly conceivable that he was angry when he saw the city not destroyed. He might reflect that in the eyes of men he had been made a fool of; for how could the world know the actual circumstances of the case? He might also feel vexed by the reflection that he had in his own despite been forced to be the means of saving a city which Jehovah had been on the very point of destroying, and which the instincts of a narrow patriotism prompted him to wish destroyed. B. C.

2-5. He declares that it was his knowledge that the Lord was "very merciful," and would probably forgive them if they repented, that lay at the root of his original reluctance to undertake this office that had been forced upon him; and he declares that he would far prefer to yield up his own life than see his character as a prophet thus compromised. So morbid had his state of feeling become, that he would not bring himself to believe that the city could be spared after he had, in the Lord's name, pronounced its doom. He therefore posted himself on an advantageous station in the environs, and resolved to remain there till the time had elapsed within which he had declared the city should be destroyed. *Kittó*.

2. Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they have despaired of doing good by it, but Jonah declined preach-

ing because he was afraid of doing good by it; and still he persists in the same corrupt notion. It was his saying when he was in his own country, but it was a bad saying; yet here he stands to it; and, very unlike the other prophets, desires the woful day which he had foretold, and grieves because it does not come. Even Christ's disciples knew not what manner of spirit they were of; they did not who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did not receive them, much less did Jonah, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did receive him. When it was intimated to Peter himself that he should make no difference between Jews and Gentiles, he startled at the thing and said, "Not so, Lord;" no marvel, then, that Jonah looked upon it with regret that Nineveh should become a favorite. Jonah herein had a zeal for God as the God of Israel in a particular manner, but not according to knowledge. H.

God meant His mission to be one of mercy and love; one that, through fear, should awaken repentance—that, through repentance, should bring salvation. That was not Jonah's meaning. He could not comprehend it. He was the instrument of doing a work that he did not intend. Through him the people were saved, without its being his purpose. *Stoughton*.

In estimating Jonah's character, it is very material to observe that he did then pray; this shows that his was no sullen revolt from God—for then he would not have prayed at all—but an inward conflict rather, in which, instead of abandoning himself to feelings which he knew to be wrong, though he knew not how to master, he frankly made his complaint to God, striving if he might to get at one with himself and with his God. If, while the discontent had still rankled within, he had made show outwardly of pious submission, his behavior would, it is true, have appeared to less disadvantage before men; but if man is now disposed to judge the prophet with severe and wondering disapprobation, Jehovah showed

His acceptance on the whole of His honest though wilful servant, both by His care for his present accommodation and by His whole moral treatment of him.

**3. Take my life.** Rather, my soul. In making this request, Jonah might plead the example of Moses in his hour of weary vexation (Num. 11 : 15), and the more recent example of Elijah (1 K. 19 : 4), whose history his own so much resembles. Here again we observe that there is no thought of self-murder; the prophet commits himself still to the disposal of God, — *Thou to live*. To be pointed at as a false pretender; with my mission to my own people a failure; with my mission to Gentile Nineveh, already the shame of impenitent Israel, hereafter perhaps to prove its ruin. Let me not see my wretchedness (Num. 11 : 15). B. C.

**4. Does thine anger burn justly, rightly? Hast thou any good reason for such anger?** A very gentle rebuke indeed, for sins so great and so provoking to God! H. C.—We are struck with the gentleness with which Jehovah merely *suggests* a reproof; a representation true to the facts of usual experience. It is thus He is wont, whether by inward or outward warning, to reprove His erring servants. B. C.—See how mildly the great God speaks to this foolish man—to teach us to restore those that are fallen with a spirit of meekness, and with soft answers to turn away wrath. God appeals to himself and to his own conscience, “Dost thou well? Thou knowest thou dost not.” We should often put this question to ourselves: “Is it well to say thus, to do thus? Can I justify it? Must I not unsay it and undo it again by repentance, or be undone forever?” When passion is up, let it meet with this check: “Do I well to be so soon angry, so often angry, so long angry, to put myself into such a heat, and to give others such ill language in my anger? Is this well, that I suffer these headstrong passions to get dominion over me?” H.

**5. He went forth and took up his abode on “the east side of the city;”** on some rising ground, we may suppose, not far off, such as the Jebel Maklub or the more distant Kurdish hills, whence he could command a view of the city. There he remained till the forty days were expired, when he perceived that Jehovah had forborne to execute the sentence which he had certainly been commissioned to denounce. He had no difficulty in divining the cause of its remission, having, in fact, himself anticipated it (verse 2). B. C.

**6. Still the Lord is mindful of the little comforts of His servant Jonah, and brings up over**

him very suddenly the shade of a rapidly growing plant, to “relieve his sufferings”—for so, more accurately, I render the words translated “to deliver him from his grief.” This “gourd” is supposed to be the shrub known by the name of *Palma Christi*. H. C.

The plant called in Hebrew *kikaion* is really the *Palma Christi*, the *Ricinus communis* of botanists. Dr. Pusey, who has collected much valuable information both about the white shark and the *Palma Christi*, quotes also an interesting account of the manner in which it is sometimes as suddenly destroyed. “On warm days, when a small rain falls, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which in one night so often and so suddenly cut off its leaves that only their bare ribs remain” (*Introd. to Jonah*). He further notices that there is nothing in the text to imply that it was the stem that was gnawed asunder, and that the word “worm” might be used collectively for a multitude of caterpillars. As regards the minor point, that if Jonah had built him a booth, he would not have needed a *Palma Christi* to shade him, he further shows that the booth which Jonah put up was such as the Jews erected at the Feast of Tabernacles; and that these, composed of slight branches, did not exclude the sun. But we can very well imagine that, in so hot a climate, no erection of dead boughs, or even of planks, would give a shade so refreshing as green living foliage. R. P. S.

The supposition that the *Ricinus* was the *kikaion* of Jonah, suggested probably in the first instance, but also strongly countenanced by its Egyptian name, is greatly favored by several circumstances of its natural history: 1. According to universal testimony it is of extremely rapid growth, its cane-like stem and branches shooting up and spreading in a wonderfully short time. In Arabia, Niebuhr observed one which grew eight feet in five months. In America it has been even known to attain the height of thirteen feet in three months. 2. It furnishes a thick and grateful shade with its wide, dark green, six or seven-lobed leaves, which from their resemblance to a man’s hand have suggested its name of *Palma Christi*. 3. It is both extremely perishable and subject to sudden destruction by the caterpillar. Altogether there is no reason for questioning the identification of the *kikaion* with the palmerist, which is indeed accepted by modern critics with great unanimity. B. C.

Jonah goes to work under the wall of Nineveh; he makes him a booth, and sits under its



shadow ; but the sun still flames above him and strikes down on him ; his labor is vain. That was Jonah's work ; now comes God and works. In an hour, perhaps in an instant, a plant strikes its root downward, and sends its branches upward, and Jonah is sitting at his ease in its cool and refreshing shade. And this without any labor, without a movement, on his part. He neither "labored for it, nor made it to grow." The Lord, it is said, "made it to come up over him." It covered him as he sat. And now comes out human nature. How unlike the nature of God ! We are told that "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd ;" or, as it is rendered in the margin, "he rejoiced in it with great joy." There sits a man, and a man of God too, looking down on a city containing well-nigh a million of souls, and expecting the judgments of heaven every moment to blast it ; and yet, in this situation, he is studying his own comfort as though he had nothing else to think of, and rejoicing in a little ease for his body. C. B.

He was "*glad of the gourd*," which, springing up in a night, sheltered him from the burning rays of a fierce sun, but not *thankful* to God whose goodness had provided it ; the feeling was purely selfish and sensual, destitute utterly of piety. Glad of the gift, but not a thought of the Giver ; for, as soon as the gourd "withered away," he was "angry," and "wished for death," and bitterly complained to God, and justified his folly and petulance. In all this, Jonah is a type of multitudes of nominal Christians—"glad" because of God's great mercies, but never grateful ; the temporal gift, but not the Divine Giver, is thought of. *Anon*.

7. Mark the instrument that God used wherewith to afflict Jonah. He might have sent a hurricane to uproot his gourd, a wild beast out of the forest to devour it, or lightning from heaven to blast it ; but He prepares a worm, and but one worm, to execute the work, and the work is done, done effectually, done suddenly, as if with violence ; "it smote the gourd that it withered." All through the night, when its protection was but little wanted, it flourished ; but now, just at the time when it is most needed, it dies. And so *our comforts are often taken from us, when they appear to be the most needed*. Our prop gives way when we are the weakest. Our friends die or fail us, our health sinks, our property goes, just at the very period when we seem as though we could not do without them. Such is the history of this miraculous plant—it sprang up, it gave

delight, it brought into sight the baseness of the human heart, and then withered. And is not this the history of every comfort the earth yields ? You need not be told again why it is so ; why the same God that prepares the gourd, prepares also the worm ; why He takes away the comforts that He gives. C. B.

Is it not a blessing when these gourds wither ? Is it not mercy in God to sweep them utterly away, even though the heart should be half broken by the loss ? There is one reposing, for example, on his goods laid up for many days, and regarding them just as Jonah did the goodly foliage of the sheltering plant. Is it not a mercy, in the high reckoning of eternity at least, to have these gifts of God withdrawn, that God Himself may be our trust ? Another is reposing under the shadow of some protecting friend. To him, and not to God, the eye of hope, or the heart of expectation turns. Now, is it not a mercy, according to the standard of the sanctuary at least, that that earthly friend should be withdrawn, that we may learn to lean upon the Lord alone ? A third may be seeking all the heaven which he knows, in something which perishes in the using. Is it not well that the delusion should be swept away, that God may be sought, and eternity provided for ? Many will bless God forever because their gourds were withered—just as the saints in glory praise the King of saints, "because they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted and tormented." Had the gourd not withered, the soul would not have been saved ; and the withering of the gourd, therefore, makes the anthem of the saved the louder. W. K. *Treadie*.

Don't argue about your afflictions ; for in that case it is likely to fasten and perpetuate the impression on your hearts that God is dealing hardly with you, and driving you beyond the reach of all consolation and all hope. Don't rise up like Jonah, nor attempt to fix your undivided attention on the blasted gourd lying all withered around you. For in that case you may be ready to exclaim, as he did, "I do well to be angry." Take your heaviest trials to the mercy-seat. Spread them out before God. Deal with Him, not as with a task-master, but a loving Father. Ask Him to solve your doubts, to cast light upon your darkness, to aid you amid your helplessness, and to reveal to you why it is that He has been afflicting you, what defective grace He is seeking to supply, what wayward tendency He is seeking to

correct, what besetting sin He is seeking to subdue. Remember that there is a need-be for every affliction that He sends; and neither speak unadvisedly with your lips, nor charge God foolishly. It may be a bitter medicine that He pours into your cup; but He does not do it recklessly, nor without some good reason, or with the design of harming you. *E. Hull.*

Jonah had a gourd that was to him an arbor; he sat under it secure; but suddenly there was a worm that bit it, and it died. Compare, secretly in your hearts, your riches to that gourd; your pleasure to the greenness of it; your pomp, attendance, vanities, to the leaves of it; your sudden increase of wealth to the growing and shooting up of it. But, withal, forget not the worm and the wind. The worm that shall kill your root is death, and the wind that shall blow upon you is calamity. *Adams, 1654.*—God can send a worm to bite the gourd, while it flourishes over our heads; and while He “gives riches,” deny a “heart to enjoy them.” For whence is it else, that there are some who flourish with honors, flow with riches, swim with the greatest affluence of plenty, and all other the materials of delight; and yet they are as discontented, as dissatisfied as the poorest of men? Care rises up and lies down with them, sits upon their pillow, waits at their elbow, runs by their coaches; and the grim spirits of fear and jealousy haunt their stately houses and habitations. Whence is this, but from a secret displeasure of God, which takes out the vitals, the heart, and the spirit of the enjoyment, and leaves them only the *caput mortuum* of the possession. *South.*

8. This fresh outbreak of impatience on the part of Jonah is to be ascribed to his renewed sense of vexation at the sparing of Nineveh; this had for a while been somewhat allayed by the comfort, both bodily and spiritual, brought to him by the palm-erist; but now it rose up afresh, heightened by the destruction of the goodly tree and by the distressing heat of the sun. The impulsive vehemence of his temper is betrayed, alike in the pleasure which he took in the palm-erist's beauty, and in his vexation at its loss. *B. C.*

The incident of the gourd, while plainly didactic, is yet very unlike a mere invention. It harmonizes with the natural circumstances in which the prophet was placed. And yet the manner in which the lesson is taught is very unusual. Who would have thought that such a man as Jonah could have shown any anger over the loss of the gourd? It was the petulance of the prophet which broke forth, and it

was the contrast between the selfish smallness of the man and the large love and generous pity of God, which evidently was intended to be the main lesson of the incident. But who would have invented such facts? The form is too simple and natural for fiction. The character of Jonah is too extraordinary to be the product of mere genius. Its very improbability is the guarantee of its truthfulness. *Redford.*

9. The same question, in the same words as in verse 6, and with the same meaning, only that this respects his recent anger because of the withered gourd. Strange to say, Jonah justifies himself, and by implication complains of God for suffering the worm to kill his gourd! *H. C.*—The prophet here records his own impatience, as Moses and other holy writers have done, without concealing any circumstance of it. *Bp. Hall.*

10, 11. *Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity, &c.* Then said the Lord, I have done this purposely to show thee thine own error and weakness; thou hadst pity on a sorry plant, which cost thee no labor, which received no life from thee, which suddenly came up and suddenly vanished. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are sixscore thousand infants, that have not lived to offend, and much cattle, which are not capable of offence? How much are these better than the senseless plants of the earth! And these are the work of my hands, and have cost me much care and regard, and such as require time and leisure for their perfection; bethink thyself therefore how just reason I have to be angry at thy unmercifulness, which art angry at My forbearance of Nineveh. *Bp. Hall.*

The passage makes useful and rich revelations in respect to the feelings of the great God as to those fearful judgments which fall on the wicked, but which, as the world is, must involve some innocent beings—a part of them innocent as having not yet reached sufficient intelligence to make them morally accountable, and others as not having by nature any moral attributes. In the light of this passage it becomes altogether plain that God always takes into account the case of these sinless sufferers, and regards their presence as itself a plea for sparing the guilty. Of course he will give this plea all the consideration which the nature of the case will allow. He will punish, in forms that necessarily involve the unsusining in the general ruin, only when the ends of a moral system imperatively demand it. Who can estimate the amount of sparing mercy which

the guilty of our world owe, in this life, to God's pity for infants and for the sentient but unsmiling animal races? II. C.

The purpose of the mention of these one hundred and twenty thousand children is at once to indicate how large the city was, as appears from its immediately following the words "that great city," and also to present a plea for showing mercy to a population so many of whom had not themselves deserved to suffer. The argument of these last two verses comprises a number of very striking thoughts. Some of them are the following: Any vegetable growth is of small account compared with a human being, much more compared with a large city; the mushroom-like, frail existence of a palmerist shows as nothing by the side of the ancient city of Nineveh; God's works are a dearly prized possession in His eyes, with which He is loath to part, especially when He has "labored" for them and brought them to great magnitude by a long process of care (compare the "lost sheep" and the "lost piece of silver" in Luke 15). While no reference is here made to the repentance of the Ninevites—a consideration of vast weight, and one which would have been of itself amply sufficient, which however at present stands in the background—stress is *ex abundantia* laid upon the one hundred and twenty thousand innocents which Nineveh contained, mighty though unconscious intercessors! nay, even upon the "much cattle" which was there, showing that God does "care for oxen." Altogether, a glimpse is here afforded us into the heart of God, whose tender mercies are over all His works, which not only marks the passage as one of remarkable beauty, but also fits it to be through all ages a standing reproof of every form of bigotry. The narrative closes abruptly without stating the impression left upon the prophet's own mind. But this the narrator deems unnecessary. It suffices him, Jonah (as we suppose) himself, that the prophet's narrow-mindedness is exposed and rebuked, and that God's mercy is justified. B. C.

Thus the book ends with the majestic thought that in God's government of men, Gentile as well as Jew, penitence universally procures pardon, since human life is everywhere God's loving workmanship, in which He has pleasure, and which He will not willingly pain, and only in the last extremity of impenitence destroy. *Elastic.*

*Suggested Truths and Lessons.*

*How Jonah received this unexpected issue of his*

*preaching.* Perhaps, full of Jewish prejudices like Peter, he could not fall in with the idea that God would extend that mercy to the Gentile Ninevites which He was now withdrawing from his own people, Israel. Or he might be averse to the increase of Nineveh's power, lest that power should be employed (as it was) in the destruction of Israel. Or he might be selfishly mortified that his prediction was belied by the result. Perhaps all these causes were combined with his naturally self-willed, fretful, repining temper to produce that disagreeable and wrong frame of mind which required the further dealing of God. Yet, although with an irreverent spirit Jonah boldly justified his peevish anger, God forbears wondrously with His prophet. And we may infer that the Divine dealing was successful. Doubtless he went back a wiser, more humble and patient man, more willing that God should have His way. And his experience was not a vain or useless one in all this matter. He went back and told his own people how that great *Gentile* city had heard and heeded the one only call of Jehovah to repentance. And he wrote and handed down the same striking lesson to all succeeding generations. And he also faithfully impressed the *personal* lessons he had received, although the disclosure is so unflattering to himself. The honest simplicity with which throughout he *contrasts God's patience and pity with his own impatience and seeming hardness of heart* has no equal parallel in the Scripture history.

As God bore with Jonah, so we are to bear with good people and others in their peevish and ill-tempered times. Recall the good and the truth that is in them, and reach them by the quiet force of a gentle spirit and a right example. Neither to Elijah nor to Jonah, in their bold repining, did God answer sharply back. In both cases He employed natural agencies to illustrate the needed lessons. And, as far as his wisdom and grace enables us, let us illustrate by our daily life, spirit, and deed, what lessons we may convey to others more infirm. B.

One great lesson in Jonah's story is the duty and happiness of having our will coincident with the will of God. God is the world's great Ruler. His will is law. His power is supreme: yet it is not arbitrary might, but wise and gracious omnipotence. To resist God's will is as wicked as it is foolish—as ruinous as it is wicked. "Will ye set the thorns and briars against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." First,

Jonah resisted, and fled from the presence of the Lord; and trouble followed, and overtook, and overwhelmed him. Then Jonah resisted again, and in the bitter workings of his own mind, in his petulance and anger, he paid the penalty of disquietude and anguish. For what peace could there be in a mind at war with the order, the government, the Sovereign of the universe? We are taught, then, that there is only trouble without and misery within for all those who fight against their Maker. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Not in earthly gourds shall ye long find comfort and peace, for God can blast them, and He will if you make them your portion. Whereas, in life's hottest day and coldest night, amid the bleakest scenes and under the roughest blasts, if your will be one with His, you shall enjoy an invisible protection, and be cheered by spiritual comfort, which shall be unto you as "an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." *J. Stoughton.*

The evident intention of the whole chapter is to place man in contrast with God. Jonah's idea of the Divine character was plainly an imperfect one. He thought that Divine repentance was Divine weakness, that the non-fulfilment of the word was a dishonor to Jehovah. What he did *not* understand was the supremacy of love in the dealings of God with His creatures. He was displeased; he was very angry. Yet it was not entirely for himself. It was for Jehovah and the honor of His spoken word. But afterward he came to see that the greatness of God is not that which man is prone to think it, the greatness of power alone, or even of justice alone, but the fatherly greatness, which smites only for the sake of saving life, and not for the sake of destroying it. Why did Jonah pity the gourd? because it served him. Was it not a much greater pity which God had for Nineveh? absolutely unselfish, perfectly pure, infinitely great. The thoughts and feelings of the prophet are those of a man of like passions and infirmities with all others; but when we set over against them the purposes and revelations of God, surely we shall bow down and worship Him, before whom all men and things lie open; who, while He has made Himself known to His servants the prophets, is yet unsearchable in His wisdom;

but His love is a "height and length and depth and breadth which passeth knowledge."

One of the most remarkable facts about the Book of Jonah is, that while he himself is so prominent in it, yet there is not one word from beginning to end of comment upon his character and conduct. He openly disobeys a Divine command; he is followed silently and swiftly by the Divine judgment. Yet there is no word of the writer's own in condemnation of his flight. He passes through a wonderful discipline of Providence, and is miraculously saved. His hymn of thanksgiving is preserved. But no word is said of his state of mind, his sense of sin, his repentance, his return to the attitude of submission and prompt obedience to the Divine command. He receives his new commission, and at once rises up to fulfil it; goes to Nineveh and preaches with marvellous success; still there is a strange reserve in the narrative. One would have expected some description of Jonah's feelings and experience in entering the heathen city, some account of the method which he followed in calling the Ninevites to repentance. But the facts are again set before us in the barest, most naked simplicity, without one single sentence of reflection. This is still more noticeable in the last chapter, where again the contrast is suggested between what was in Jonah's mind and what was in the mind of Jehovah. We are looking on a very pitiable object: a prophet of God, under the influence of most unworthy and miserable feelings, betraying a rebellious anger against the appointments of the Divine will, which rouses a holy indignation against him; and still the close of the book is significantly abrupt. Nothing added to the picture; only the touching remonstrance against the selfish narrowness of the man, the tender pleading of Divine compassion against human prejudice and blindness. The only probable and consistent view of the work is that Jonah wrote it himself. He therefore said as little about himself as possible. He told the facts with all their weight of meaning against his own character, just as they were, without a line of exculpation or condemnation. He left his character to be a study for his successors, because he knew that through him God was speaking to the whole world. *Redford.*

## MICAII.

## MICAII: INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTERS I., II.

**1:1** THE word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

**2** Hear, ye peoples, all of you; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord  
**3** God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.  
**4** And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before  
**5** the fire, as waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, *and* as the plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.  
**7** And all her graven images shall be beaten to pieces, and all her hires shall be burned with fire, and all her idols will I lay desolate: for of the hire of an harlot hath she gathered them, and unto the hire of an harlot shall they return. For this will I wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the jackals, and a mourning like the ostriches.  
**9** For her wounds are incurable: for it is come even unto Judah; it reacheth unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem. Tell it not in Gath, weep not at all: at Beth-le Aphrah have  
**11** I rolled myself in the dust. Pass ye away, O inhabitant of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame: the inhabitant of Zaanai is not come forth; the wailing of Beth-ezel shall take from you the  
**13** stay thereof. For the inhabitant of Maroth waiteth anxiously for good: because evil is come down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem. Bind the chariot to the swift steed, O inhabitant of Lachish: she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; for the transgressions of  
**14** Israel were found in thee. Therefore shalt thou give a parting gift to Moresheth-gath: the  
**15** houses of Achzib shall be a deceitful thing unto the kings of Israel. I will yet bring unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah, him that shall possess thee: the glory of Israel shall come  
**16** even unto Adullam. Make thee bald, and poll thee for the children of thy delight: enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

**2:1** Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! when the morning  
**2** is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even  
**3** a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the Lord: Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye walk haughtily;  
**4** for it is an evil time. In that day shall they take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, *and* say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my  
**5** people: how doth he remove it from me! to the rebellious he divideth our fields. Therefore  
**6** thou shalt have none that shall cast the line by lot in the congregation of the Lord. Prophecy ye not, *thus* they prophesy. They shall not prophesy to these: reproaches shall not depart.  
**7** Shall it be said, O house of Jacob, Is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings?  
**8** Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? But of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye strip the robe from off the garment from them that pass by securely *as*  
**9** *men* averse from war. The women of my people ye cast out from their pleasant houses;  
**10** from their young children ye take away my glory for ever. Arise ye, and depart: for this is not your rest: because of uncleanness that destroyeth, even with a grievous destruction.  
**11** If a man walking in wind and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah: as a flock in the midst of their pasture, they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is gone up before them; they have broken forth and passed on to the gate, and are gone out thereat: and their king is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them.

### Introduction.

MICAH, a name abbreviated from Micah, which signifies "Who is like God?" was of Moresheth-gath, a city near Eleutheropolis, and not far from the country of the Philistines. His introductory verse states that he prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. As the two former reigned each sixteen years and the latter twenty-nine, the entire duration of his ministry possible within this statement is sixty-one years. He was contemporary with Isaiah, who dates one vision "in the year that King Uzziah, the father of Jotham," "died" (6:1), and who was certainly in active service as a prophet under Hezekiah. Interesting collateral evidence that Micah prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah is found in Jer. 26:17-19. While some of the priests, princes and false prophets demanded that Jeremiah should die for the alleged crime of speaking against the royal city, certain of the elders rose up to defend him with this plea: "Micah, the Morasthite, prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah (very publicly), saying: 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.' Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death?" etc. See the original passage (Micah 3:12). Micah spake bold and fearless words for God and righteousness. He spake concerning both Samaria and Jerusalem, mostly the latter, exposing and rebuking their sins. He predicted the destruction of both cities. He expatiated on the final glory of Zion, the real kingdom of the Messiah, in words of great beauty and power. It is important to a full understanding of the work of these prophets that we think of their relations to the throne, stemming the tide of wickedness under such reigns as that of Ahaz; powerfully aiding the work of reform under such good kings as Hezekiah. Contemporary with these two kings were Micah, Hosea, Isaiah and Nahum, II. C.

The Book of Micah resembles in many particulars that of Hosea. It is a summary of an extended prophetic activity in Judah, while the Book of Hosea summarizes a lengthy min-

istry in Israel. Like Hosea, it is abrupt in its transitions, sharp in its contrasts, abundant in its imagery, often obscure in its details. Like Hosea, it also communicates, in a striking manner, severity and tenderness. For these reasons its comprehension appears, at the outstart, difficult to the student. But patient labor in its study will meet a sure reward. Its unity, as an organic whole, is much more marked than in the case of Hosea. The prophet Micah was the contemporary of Isaiah. These two, laboring together in Judah, in the Assyrian period, have much in common in their historical situation, in their mission, in their ideas and their expression of them. The study of the prophecy of either casts much light upon that of the other. The peculiar glory of the Book of Micah is its Messianic prophecy, especially that regarding the person of the Messiah. In the description of the Ruler from Bethlehem the book finds its culmination. The positive, explicit and personal character of its Messianic prediction places the Book of Micah in a central position in the development of prophecy in Judah. *Burroughs.*

His prophetic visions and, in some places, his style of recording them, have a strong resemblance to those of Isaiah. He foresaw what would be the issue of the Assyrian invasion, which Isaiah lived to record as historical fact. He foretold the destruction of Samaria, the approach of the enemy, in a later invasion, to the very gates of Jerusalem, with the laying waste of the fenced cities of Judah. (Cf. Micah 1:9 with Isa. 26, 37.) It was revealed to him that a time of grace would yet be granted to Jerusalem, but that a day would come when the whole race of Judah should be swept out of their own land into captivity. He saw, with not less clearness, that a day would come when the remnant of Israel would be restored. He never lets his people forget that their sufferings were the proper fruit of their evil deeds. They had become debased and dishonest in their common dealings with each other; mutual confidence had perished in the nearest relationships of human life; the magistrates were open to bribes; the nobles were recklessly cruel and rapacious; the priests had become hirelings; the prophets were greedy traitors to their sacred calling; idols and witchcraft had

usurped the worship of Jehovah. He deals less than Isaiah with the sins of the national government. His references to the social condition of the people would fit the state of things under Ahaz, and under Hezekiah at the very beginning of his reign, before his reforms had taken effect. But in contemplating this utterly poisoned condition of society, he was never permitted to lose sight of the Divine promises. Again and again he abruptly turns to take a glance at the vision of good things to come. The promises made to Abraham and Jacob (7 : 20) were safely treasured in his heart as his ever ready source of comfort.

But he also never fails to keep us in mind that the restoration of the old chosen race is but a type of the reign of the Messiah. What he says of the temporal kingdom is ever connecting itself with the kingdom to come which is not of this world. In no one of the prophets is this peculiarity more marked. But he and Isaiah stand alone in the distinctness with which they bring forth the facts of our Saviour's life on earth. It was given to Micah to see that He, whose goings forth were from everlasting, was to come into the world in a village as humble as Moresheth, his own birth-place. Still it was Jerusalem, "the flock-town" (4 : 8), which was to be the centre from which the Divine teaching was to stream forth to cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. And it was thither the "many nations" were to rush, and Judah and Israel were to return again to become one people, the nucleus of the universal Church of God (chaps. 2 : 12, 13 ; 4 : 2, etc.).

When speaking of their great common subject, the sublime eloquence of Micah may well be compared with that of Isaiah, except that its flights are less sustained. It is a striking point in the relation in which the two prophets stood to each other, that one notable passage is common to them (Isa. 2 : 2, 3, 4 ; Micah 4 : 1, 2, 3). A great weight of authority ascribes the original authorship of the passage to Micah. But the question is not satisfactorily settled.

Perhaps no one of the prophets, not even excepting Jeremiah and Hosea, affords us such a marked impression of his own temper and disposition, little as he expressly tells of himself. When he is not rapt into the glories of the Messiah's kingdom, his style in almost every line is full of character. He shows himself to be tenderly affectionate, sympathetic and excitable. Something of the warm familiarity with which he regarded his own neighborhood seems to be exemplified in the very peculiar

style of the passage in which he predicts the fate of the nine cities of the Shephelah, with a play on the name of each one of them (1 : 10-15). His fervid sympathy prompts him to put himself into the guise of a captive waiting for the strokes which were to fall upon Israel (1 : 8) ; to roll himself in dust on account of the woe to come upon Beth-abrah (1 : 10) ; to see with the intense excitement of an eye-witness the progress of "the Breaker" who was to force a way for the crowd of His people to escape from their captivity (2 : 12, 13). B. C.

The whole divides itself into three sections : the first (chaps. 1 and 2) beginning with, "Hear, all ye people ;" the second (chaps. 3-5) beginning with, "Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob ;" the third (chaps. 6 and 7) beginning with, "Hear ye now what the Lord saith." In these there is not merely a reference from time to time to what has preceded, but a progress of thought. In the first part the corruption alike of Israel and Judah is traced to the capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem (chap. 1 : 5) ; and judgment is therefore to begin at Samaria, the very stones of which are to be poured down into the valley. But it will not stop there, but will sweep up to the very gate of God's people, even to Jerusalem (verses 6-9).

In the second section the capture and destruction of Jerusalem are foretold with increased energy. It is in this portion that we find the prediction which wrought so powerfully upon the mind of the king and his princes, and also of Isaiah, the great counsellor of Hezekiah's reign. But Micah does not rest content with general denunciations ; he predicts that not Nineveh, the then dominant power, but Babylon should be the place of Judah's captivity (chap. 4 : 10), thus forestalling in a remarkable way Isaiah's prophecy spoken after the visit of Merodach-baladan's ambassadors. Yet everywhere else it is the Assyrian who is described as Judah's enemy (chaps. 5 : 5, 6 ; 7 : 12), just as we should expect in Hezekiah's reign. Lastly, in the third part, the prophet turns to exhortation, in which threatenings and promises alternate with extraordinary vividness and force.

And so, too, as regards the promises. The first section ends with a general prediction of future happiness : "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee ; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel." But the second section is full of the most direct Messianic predictions. The mountain of the Lord's house is to be established as the centre to which all the world shall flock (chap. 4 : 1). The law is to go out from

Zion, that it may be the possession of the Gentiles (*verse* 2). Universal peace is to prevail (*verse* 3). Zion is to thresh all nations, that the wheat may be gathered in for God (*verse* 13). Bethlehem Ephrathah is mentioned by name as the birthplace of Him whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (*chap.* 5 : 2) ; and the remnant of Jacob is to be as dew for sweetness and gentleness in preaching the Gospel, but as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, to tear down the strongholds of wickedness, and to trample the licentiousness of heathenism and its false gods under foot (*verses* 7, 8).

In the last section the prophet speaks chiefly of the peaceable fruits of the religion of Christ. If men wish to be accepted they must come unto God, not with Jewish sacrifices ; still less with those blood-stained Moloch rites, in which men gave their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul. God must now be sought by doing justly, by loving mercy, and by walking humbly with Him (*chap.* 6 : 6-8). The penitent soul must now look to Jehovah, and wait for the God of its salvation (*chap.* 7 : 7). So will it raise the anthem of praise, saying, " Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage ? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy." Dr. Pusey speaks of him as " the mighty prophet, who wrought a repentance greater than his great contemporary Isaiah ;" and yet, as the same authority has with great labor proved, the Book of Micah is a finished poem, smooth and measured in the flow of its words, and with every cadence carefully attended to. But even more noble is the prophet's moral teaching. No book of the Old Testament strikes deeper chords in our nature, or strikes them with a more masterly hand, than that of Micah, the villager, but withal the meet partner of Isaiah in revealing to mankind the richness of evangelic truth. R. P. S.

#### *First Section, Chaps. 1 and 2.*

In a series of vivid pictures of the horrors of invasion, connected by word-play with the names of a number of provincial towns, the course and completeness of Judah's ruin are portrayed. Reverting to the authors of this impending judgment, he attacks the privileged and powerful classes for their fraudulent oppression of the poor and their merciless rapacity, threatening them with retributive humiliation and extirpation. Their sneer against himself and his God he retorts, defends the justice of

Jehovah, once more pillories the heartless cruelties perpetrated on the weak and defenceless, declares the very land is sick of it, and must purge itself of them and their abominations, and taunts them with their besotted trust in lying prophets, that promise them physical prosperity in spite of moral wrong. Then in swift recoil from the dark prospect he turns to the brighter future beyond, and pictures the nation's restoration to God's favor, and to happy enjoyment of the land of promise. *Elastic.*

**I : 1-2.** The prophet summons all the nations of the earth to hear. Practically, they are supposed to be convened for a great judgment scene, and the Almighty God comes down from His throne in heaven to appear as a witness against them for their sins. His coming down is portrayed with wonderful grandeur. " See ! the Lord comes out of His place ; He comes down : He treads on the high places of the earth," as if His glorious footsteps rested only on the mountain tops ; and " the mountains are molten" under the touch of His feet ; new valleys are cleft ; the solid hills melt as wax before the fire, and flow as water leaping down a precipice. Such convulsions of nature betoken the majesty of nature's God ! H. C.

The judgment inflicted upon His covenant people is held up by the Lord as a warning to the *heathen*. Jehovah, as Judge of His people, is a witness against the heathen, Micah 1 : 2 ; compare also as chief passage, Jer. 25 : 29 sqq. : " Do I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by My name, and should ye be utterly unpunished ? Ye shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth." And then is described the manner in which evils shall pursue one nation after another like a whirlwind, until the slain shall lie from one end of the earth to the other. The judgment inflicted on the heathen is frequently so connected with that poured out upon Israel, that the arrogance with which the heathen, as the Lord's instruments, have treated Israel, the contempt which they have even shown for Israel's God, is represented as calling forth the Divine vengeance. O.

**5.** This judgment of Judah and Israel is of most vital concern to all the nations of the earth, since in it and from it they may learn the ways of God's reign over all nations, and the doom which awaits them unless they repent. " What is the transgression of Jacob ? Is it not Samaria ?"—that is, is it not found in Samaria, concentrated, embodied, developed there—viz., in her idolatry, her violence, injus-



tice, pride and general corruption of morals? So also Jerusalem had taken the lead in the idolatries and corruptions of Judah. From this point forward through the chapter, the doom of Samaria and her kingdom is the main subject.

**6.** This is a picture of utter desolation. "Heaps of the field," said of a city, shows a surprising contrast to what it was. Once full of noble buildings, now only piles of ruins, heaps of stones and furrows cast up by the plough. So Samaria returns back to the status of a plantation, with its ploughed fields and vineyards. H. C.

Scenes of columns are still standing in line, as if in their original position; all, however, being destitute of capitals, and their bases being buried deep beneath the present surface. As many more are lying prostrate, half concealed by the growing grain of the fields or the tangle of weeds and thistles. Nowhere in Palestine proper did I observe such profuse broken remains of former architectural magnificence. The very terms of Micah's prophecy seemed as apt as the general fulfilment of his prediction is striking. *Bart.*—Not more literally have the denunciations on Tyre or on Babylon been accomplished. To the eye-witness the fulfilment is startling in its accuracy. *Tristram.*

**7.** As is usual and altogether right, God's judgments follow and point out the great sins they come to punish. Hence, the altar and all that pertains to idolatry come up in remembrance before God in the day of His visitation, as appears in this verse. H. C.

**8.** In the ready sympathy with which the prophet sees ruin coming on Judah, his own country, as well as on Samaria, he speaks of himself as assuming the guise of a captive, not merely that of a mourner. He thus becomes a representative of the approaching captivity of his people. B. C.

**9.** The blow that fell on Samaria and the Ten Tribe kingdom was fatal. It swept the nation into a hopeless captivity, and laid the whole land utterly desolate. It also alarmed Judah. Under Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, this same Assyrian power even came within sight of Jerusalem, and might be said to have reached her gates.

**10.** The remaining part of this chapter is a graphic painting of the first results of the Assyrian invasion, as they were felt in one city after another along the line of his march. In most of the cases the things said of each city are a play upon the significant name of that

city—a method of writing well adapted to impress the idea upon the memory.

**12.** This "evil came to the gate of Jerusalem"—no farther. The Assyrian invader never sacked Jerusalem. His invasion proved his ruin.

**16.** The eagle is referred to as an illustration of baldness. Tearing out the hair, or even cutting it off, were usual signs of extreme grief. Hence the prophet exhorts Israel, considered as the mother of her people, to go into mourning for her children, because they are gone away into captivity, to return no more. H. C.

**Chap. 2.** Having proclaimed the visitation which was coming upon Judah and Israel, the prophet now denounces special woe on those by whose offences it was occasioned. First among these were they who laid plans to enrich themselves at the cost of their brethren, and who listened to the counsels of false prophets. This denunciation is followed on a sudden by a promise of deliverance for the Lord's people. B. C.

This chapter presents the sins of the people (verses 1, 2); God's threatenings (verse 3); lamentations over her doom (verses 4, 5); the gainsaying of a wicked people against God and His prophets (verse 6); the prophet's indignant reply (verse 7); a further description of their sins (verses 8, 9); the sort of prophets the people choose (verse 11); and promises of good (verses 12, 13).

**1.** This woe fitly comes down, not on those who sin inadvertently, or only under the impulse of sudden temptation, but on those who coolly and with the clear-headed thought of the night watches, frame plans of mischief and work out schemes for wrong, to be executed in the morning; and who are wicked enough for all the mischief their hands have the power to do. H. C.

**3.** *Behold, against this family do I devise an evil.* As they devise mischief against others, so will I devise evil against them, as a due punishment for their sin. As they have unjustly deprived others of their inheritance, so a conquering enemy shall dispossess them and carry them into captivity. See the following verse. The word "family" is equivalent to people, as appears from Jer. 1:15. W. Louth.

**5.** The words are an address to the whole people, denouncing the irrecoverable loss of their country, and that they should no more return to it, to be therein the congregation of the Lord, and to divide it among themselves by the "cord" or measuring line. *Poore.*

**7.** "Do not My words do good to him that

walketh uprightly?" Yes, they do good when they are translated into living deeds. A man gets good only as he builds up a noble character. But a good character is made up of good habits, and good habits are made up of good acts, and good acts are but the forms and expressions of God's words and ideas. *Anon.*

There is a soul and spirit of Divine truths that can dwell or lodge nowhere but in a spiritual being, in a living thing, because itself is nothing but life and spirit. Neither can it, where indeed it is, express itself sufficiently in words and sounds, but it will best declare and speak itself in actions; as the old manner of writing among the Egyptians was, not by words, but things. The life of Divine truths is better expressed in actions than in words, because actions are more living than words. Words are nothing but dead resemblances and pictures of those truths which live and breathe in actions; and the kingdom of God consists not in word, but in life and power. Then let us show our knowledge concocted into our lives and actions; let us really manifest that we are Christ's disciples by the fruits that we daily yield in our lives and conversations; for "herein," says Christ, "is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." *Cadworth.*

**10.** The Lord now addresses the whole people. The land which He had given them was so polluted by their sin that it could no longer be their resting-place. In order to escape utter destruction, they were to go into captivity. They had made the land sick. B. C.

"Up and away"—be out of this land; "for this is not your rest." God gave Canaan as a land of rest to His people, but never to such apostates as you! They had so polluted the land by their sins that it should itself destroy them. The very land is thought of as instinct with life, and fired with holy indignation to devour these guilty inhabitants! H. C.

There is no strain upon the imagination in thinking of life as a journey. That is one of the simplest and most beautiful figures by which the action of life can be represented. We are travellers; we are here but for a little time; on our feet are sandals and in our hands are staves; here we have no continuing city, and we are called upon to testify to the age that we seek a country out of sight. So then, we are familiar with the figure; it commends itself to us, as life enlarges, as quite expressive of the reality of the case—every day a milestone, every year so much nearer the end. At

first the miles appear so many and so long; then, at a certain period of life the miles are but a handful, and as for their length, it is the one dimension of which they are destitute. To the child, the year is a life—a quite immeasurable quantity; to the man in mid-life and passing beyond a certain point, the year is a breath, a shadow, quickly flying—it will be gone while we are talking about it; and in that mood of mind, how pensive and tender, how solemn and rousing, the music: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." J. P.

"This is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you with a sore destruction." Pilgrims and foreigners, it is only in a heavenlier air that we are to be acclimated, and abide. The moment we come to consider our scheme of living satisfactory, our schedule of performances perfect, some unexpected revolution breaks in like a whirlwind to disturb this complacency, and set us into larger, perhaps plainer rooms, where we can drink in more light, and gain a deeper wisdom, if we will. If we have been living by the average morality, we must be led out where we can catch sight of a loftier and more absolute standard. If we have been content with artificial rules, we must learn to walk by faith. If we have counted it enough to do as others do, or to escape the reproach of law and of public opinion, we must look with more searching and humble eyes to the original law and will of God. Or, if we have taken our own instincts or reasonings for our religion, then the cross must shine out in the sky where we worship, and we must kneel and be penitent and confess at the foot of it, and henceforth "conquer" both self and the world "by that." F. D. H.

A state exposed to so much calamity can never have been designed as the scene of enjoyment; it must have been calculated for the purpose of trial. It is not Canaan; it is the wilderness through which the chosen tribes were destined to pass in their way to it; it is a vale of tears, [along] which the Christian pilgrim toils and struggles in his passage to the heavenly kingdom. Let us understand the real nature of our present condition; let us learn that nothing belonging to it is merely or principally intended for our gratification; that it is well suited to be the abode of a sinful creature upon trial, under a dispensation of mercy; where there is just enough of good to support under evil, and those prospects of greater good afforded in a future state which are sufficient to dispel despondency. It is a condition char-

aeterized by vicissitude, by danger, by suffering, and by hope ; and he is to be esteemed the happiest man who most surmounts its tempests, escapes its pollutions, and is sanctified by its trials. Are you at present in circumstances of ease and comfort ? be thankful for it, but place no reliance on its continuance. Enjoy with moderation whatever is gratifying in your lot, but let it not engage your heart, let it not deeply entangle your affection. By an intimate converse with the promises of the Gospel, learn to live above [the world], and consider it not as [constituting] your portion or your happiness. *R. Hall.*

**11.** Having shown (verses 8, 9) that these cavillers against the Lord's prophets do not "walk uprightly," and having (verse 10) warned them out of the land as their fit doom, he comes now to describe the sort of prophet they would like and shall have. *H. C.*

**12, 13.** These verses appear to contain a prophecy of the return from the captivity, expressed in terms which evidently set it forth as the type of the spiritual triumph of the Messiah. They furnish a most characteristic instance of the sudden transitions which mark the style of Micah, as well as of his graphic power. *B. C.*

The exodus, or going forth, is made prominent here by repeated reiterations as it was there in the historic facts ; and, finally, Jehovah puts Himself here at the head of His ransomed people, as then and there in the pillar of fire and of cloud. As to the ultimate significance of these verses, it will be noted that they speak both of Jacob and Israel ; but these terms are not distinctive as between the two rival kingdoms. Neither of them is the usual name to designate the kingdom of Judah. It would seem to be no part of the prophet's intention to regard the distinction of kingdoms

which was made by the revolt. The names Jacob and Israel have rather the general sense—the covenant people of God. As to time and circumstances of fulfilment, the passage is altogether general and indefinite. Beyond a doubt it must imply that God will at some future day gather His scattered people of Israel, and put Himself at their head as their Deliverer and King. He will make His earthly kingdom great and glorious. *H. C.*

**13.** *The breaker is come up before them.* He that shall break the bonds of their captivity, or break through all obstacles that hinder their return home. The Jewish commentators generally understand "the breaker," and "their king" that follows, of the same person—viz., the Messiah ; to whom the title of "breaker" may well agree, for His "breaking down" all obstacles, "the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles" (Eph. 2 : 14). *Louth.*

The breaker is come up before them, to break down all opposition, and clear the road for them ; and under His guidance they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, the door of escape out of their captivity, and are gone out by it with courage and resolution, having Omnipotence for their vanguard. Their King shall pass before them, to lead them the way, even Jehovah (He is their King), on the head of them, as He was on the head of the armies of Israel, when they followed the pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness, and when He appeared to Joshua as Captain of the Lord's hosts. Christ is the Church's King ; He is Jehovah ; He heads them ; passes before them ; brings them out of the land of their captivity ; brings them into the land of their rest. He is the Breaker that broke in upon the powers of darkness, and broke through them ; that rent the veil, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. *H.*

## MICAH, CHAPTERS III., IV., V.

**3 : 1** AND I said, Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel :  
**2** is it not for you to know judgement ? who hate the good, and love the evil ; who pluck off  
**3** their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones ; who also eat the flesh of my  
 people ; and they flay their skin from off them, and break their bones : yea, they chop them  
**4** in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry unto the LORD,  
 but he will not answer them : yea, he will hide his face from them at that time, according  
**5** as they have wrought evil in their doings. Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets  
 that make my people to err ; that bite with their teeth and cry, Peace ; and whoso putteth

6 not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him : Therefore it shall be night unto you, that ye shall have no vision ; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine ;  
 7 and the sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them. And the seers shall be ashamed, and the diviners confounded ; yea, they shall all cover their lips :  
 8 for there is no answer of God. But I truly am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgement, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.  
 9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that  
 10 abhor judgement, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem  
 11 with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money : yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is  
 12 not the LORD in the midst of us ? no evil shall come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

1 : 1 But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills ; and  
 2 peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word  
 3 of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove strong nations afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn  
 4 war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree ; and  
 5 none shall make them afraid ; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. For all the peoples will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is  
 7 driven away, and her that I have afflicted ; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation : and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion  
 8 from henceforth even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come ; yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the  
 9 daughter of Jerusalem. Now why dost thou cry out aloud ? Is there no king in thee, is  
 10 thy counsellor perished, that pangs have taken hold of thee as of a woman in travail ? Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail : for now shalt  
 11 thou go forth out of the city, and shalt dwell in the field, and shalt come even unto Babylon ; there shalt thou be rescued ; there shall the LORD redeem thee from the hand of thine  
 12 enemies. And now many nations are assembled against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye see *its desire* upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither  
 13 understand they his counsel : for he hath gathered them as the sheaves to the threshing-floor.  
 14 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion : for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy  
 15 hoofs brass : and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples ; and thou shalt devote their gain  
 5 : 1 unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. Now shalt thou gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops : he hath laid siege against us ; they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

2 But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel : whose goings forth are  
 3 from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth : then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the  
 4 children of Israel. And he shall stand, and shall feed *his flock* in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God ; and they shall abide ; for now shall he be  
 5 great unto the ends of the earth. And this *man* shall be our peace : when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him  
 6 seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof : and he shall deliver us from the  
 7 Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our border. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from the LORD, as showers  
 8 upon the grass : that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, as a lion among the

beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep : who, if he go through, treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Let thine hand be lifted up above thine adversaries, and let all thine enemies be cut off.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and will destroy thy chariots : and I will cut off the cities of thy land, and will throw down all thy strong holds : and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand ; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers : and I will cut off thy graven images and thy pillars out of the midst of thee ; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up thine Asherim out of the midst of thee : and I will destroy thy cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations which hearkened not.

**Chaps. 3-5.** The *second division* (chaps. 3-5) travels over similar ground, only omitting all mention of Samaria, condensing the threatening, and expanding the delineation of promise. We have, first, an impassioned invective against the nobles and judges, who misuse power, pervert justice, grieve down the indigent, and drive the needy to desperation. As they showed no mercy, they shall get none from God. Next he scathes with burning irony the hypocritical and venal tribe of prophets that support the corrupt chiefs, and threatens them with the confusion, ignominy and ruin that must come on men whose action is based on external expediency, not founded on the eternal laws of truth and justice. Bursting into a conjoint denunciation of corrupt judges, priests, prophets and nobles, who have built a splendid and luxurious capital out of the blood, and tears, and ruin of their country, the prophet reaches the climax of his burden in the terrible declaration that Zion the royal residence, Jerusalem the capital, and the temple itself shall be laid in ruins and desolation.

With that a revulsion of feeling ensues. Starting with the crowning element of disaster, the seer beholds the restored temple in unprecedented magnificence, accepted as the religious and moral centre of the world, exercising peaceful control over the people, while around it Israel dwells in safety, happy in repossession of more than its ancient Davidic empire. Reverting again to the second element of disaster, the defeat and depopulation of the city, he describes the certainty that this calamity will be followed by restoration, and depicts the inviolable strength of the new community. *Etnus lie*

**Chap. 3.** The prophet returns to speak against the sins of the people, dwelling specially in this chapter on the sins of the princes and judges (verses 1-4, 9-11) ; giving the sin and doom of the false prophets (verses 5-7) ; and closing with predictions of the desolation of the holy city and of the temple mountain (verse 12).

**1-3.** So far are they from knowing judgment in the practical sense, that they even hate good and love evil, and they show this by their deeds. This description of rapacity and robbery is fearfully strong. They not only fleece but flay their victims ; not only flay but tear off the flesh and eat it ; then go on to the bones ; chop them fine for the pot, as if they would boil and eat up the last thing in the poor body of their victims. So with insatiable extortion they strip men of their last right, of their last acre, and of their last farthing. *H. C.*

**6, 7.** The sun shall go down over the prophets, shall go down at noon ; all comfort shall depart from them, and they shall be deprived of all hope of it. The day shall be dark over them in which they promised themselves light. Nor shall they only be surrounded with outward troubles, but their minds shall be full of confusion, and they shall be brought to their wits' end ; their heads shall be clouded, and their own thoughts shall trouble them ; and that is trouble enough. They kept others in the dark, and now God will bring them into the dark. So they shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophecy forever shamed. They never had any true vision ; and now, the event disproving their predictions of peace, it shall be made to appear that they never had any, that there never was an answer of God to them, but they were cheats and impostors. *H.*

**8.** With a strong and full consciousness of honesty, and of being filled with the Spirit of God, Micah puts himself in contrast with those false prophets. His soul is deeply stirred within him by his abhorrence of their spirit and life, so that his holy indignation overleaps the restraints of false modesty, and he speaks out fearlessly. *H. C.*—Knowing that it was indeed the Spirit of the Lord that was in him and spake by him, that it was a Divine revelation that he delivered, he spake it boldly and as one having authority, knowing he should be justified and borne out in what he said. Those who act honestly may act boldly ; and those who

are sure that they have a commission from God need not be afraid of opposition from men. II.

**12.** Mount Zion is far the most conspicuous of the hills on which Jerusalem is built. It rises abruptly to the height of nearly three hundred feet from the valley of Hinnom, sloping down more gradually "on the sides of the north," where lay the city of the great King. It was a place of remarkable strength, so that the tabernacle, the palace of David, and the other buildings that stood on it were remarkably secure. Part of the hill is now under regular cultivation; thus verifying Micah's prophecy, that Zion should be "ploughed as a field." W. G. B.

**Chap. I.** The vision of the prophet again changes, and with greater effect. While he had been denouncing the woe soon to fall upon the earthly Zion, his mind had been relieved for a short interval (2: 12, 13) by a glimpse of a bright prospect, in which the foreseen return from the Captivity served him with figures shadowing forth a greater deliverance in a more remote future. But now that deliverance is distinctly unveiled to his sight. The "last days" appear to him, when the Messiah's kingdom should be set up. The Lord's house, no longer to be the temple of Jerusalem, but the Universal Church, was to be established forever higher than the mountains; the spiritual darkness now falling upon Israel was to be dispelled by a light destined to lighten and attract all the nations of the earth; the fearful desolations of war were to be succeeded by peace and plenty.

The prophet introduces the subject to his countrymen with words which are common to him and his elder contemporary, Isaiah. B. C.

The first eight verses are a graphic prediction of God's restoring mercy to His real Zion; verses 9, 10 resume the subject of the Captivity to Babylon; verses 11-13 note the events of a later period—the Syrian invasion and the heroic deeds of the Maccabees. H. C.

**1-3.** This passage, with slight literal variations, is the same as Isa. 2: 2, 3, 4. The question, Which of the two prophecies was its author? is a difficult one. A heavy preponderance of critical authority (including Caspari, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Keil, etc.) is in favor of Micah. Dr. Pusey says, "It is now owned, well nigh on all hands, that the great prophecy, three verses of which Isaiah prefixed to his second chapter, was originally delivered by Micah." The connection of the passage with what goes before it and what follows it appears to be natural and intimate in Micah. In

Isaiah it forms the introduction of a new subject, and what follows it has more the aspect of a comment. The best arguments in favor of this view are given by Pusey in his Introduction to Micah, p. 289, and by Delitzsch in his notes on Isaiah 2. B. C.

These words occur substantially in Isa. 2: 2-4, but appear to be original with Micah. At least it must be admitted that here they fit nicely to the previous context (3: 12), and also to the following context. In Isaiah the passage has no such close connection with the preceding context. In this passage the relation of thought to what precedes is the first thing to be noted. Zion is seen in ruins; the temple-mountain dishonored and waste—all for the sins of the covenant people. Must it hence be inferred that the kingdom of God among men is crushed down, never to rise? By no means. In the last days this kingdom shall rise in far greater glory than ever before. The temple-mountain—called here "the mountain of the house of the Lord," though in 3: 12 it is only "the mountain of the house"—shall be lifted high and firmly set on the tops of the other mountains, and high above all the hills in glory and esteem. Next, "peoples, even all the nations of men, shall flow unto it." That they shall *flow* thither implies, not that they are dragged or driven into this worship, but that they come spontaneously, as water moves with the utmost ease under the power of gravitation. Many nations shall come of their free accord. They shall exhort one another to go up to the house of the God of Jacob, to learn of the true God and of all moral duty there. God's will, as revealed in Zion, they recognize to be the fountain of all law, and they joyfully place themselves under His supreme dominion. Then His peaceful reign over the nations of men begins; they need sword and spear no longer; the culture of the soil supersedes the arts of war, and nation no more lifts up sword against its brother nation. For the law of God is the law of supreme, impartial love, administered under the sway of the Prince of Peace: how then can the result be other than universal tranquillity? Obeyed, it must supplant war forever. Men can no longer "hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Glorious scene! Blissful consummation! And this is no visionary dream. It shall yet be. The days of battles and carnage, the days of fell animosity, satanic ambition, demoniac hate, must cease, and give place to days of blessed peace and good-will

among men. *Let the love of the Great Father have the praise for all this!* Micah sees it in the distant future. Briefly and in general, he locates it "in the last days." They are future yet; but they will surely come and (may we not hope and pray?) will not long tarry! H. C.

In vain should we search the history of Israel for the fulfilment of this blessed and glowing promise. Centuries of calamity, civil war, invasion, captivity, subjugation by foreign powers, terminating at last in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the dispersion of the Jews among all nations, have blighted whatever hope this prediction may have inspired in the ancient people of God. Indeed, the prophet had already foretold that Zion should be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. Neither has any period of human history furnished the picture of peace, safety, plenty, and righteousness, that is here described. It was of the final triumph of the Messiah's kingdom that the prophet spake. The "last days" denote "the point which lies on the outermost limits of the horizon." History is filling up the intermediate spaces, and we are moving toward the glorious consummation. Christianity has already done much to humanize war, and to mitigate its horrors. It is yet to abolish it altogether. For it is through the prevalence of this spiritual, peaceful, and loving religion, the exaltation of the word and the worship of God, that the nations shall be subdued to peace. When its principles shall prevail, the very weapons of war shall be turned into implements of husbandry; production shall take the place of destruction; armies shall be disbanded; private rights shall be respected; and every home shall be the abode of peace, love and devotion. J. P. T.

Blessed are the eyes which shall see this great gathering of the nations, and the ears which shall hear the sound thereof. Blessed above those born of women, especially, the devoted men, who, after laboring in the field of the world, shall be rewarded, and at the same time astonished, by finding its harvest-home hastened, and the work which they had been pursuing, with strong crying and tears, done to their hands, done completely, and done from heaven. In this belief lies the hope and the help of the world. *Giffilen*.

God has no set time to favor Zion but when her servants favor her stones and take pleasure in the dust thereof. From the beginning the

cause of God on earth has been maintained and carried forward only by the most heroic exertion. Christianity, even in the age of miracles, was not propagated but by stupendous efforts. And it is only by a revival of primitive zeal and enterprise that the glorious things spoken of the city of our God can be accomplished. Nor need we be disheartened. We possess a thousandfold the advantage of apostles and primitive Christians for the spread of the Gospel. And shall the whole Church on earth—shall the thousand thousands who now profess the pure religion, be dismayed and paralyzed at an enterprise which had once been well-nigh accomplished by the energies of twelve men? *L. Beecher*.

The task to which we are summoned is one of unparalleled boldness, requiring the loftiest faith, the most unwearied patience, the most untiring and generous enthusiasm. Neither Alexander, nor Cæsar, nor Napoleon dreamed of such an empire as that to whose establishment Jesus Christ calls us. Is there energy adequate to the aim? Yea, verily. For He who commands us to this service is He who bore our infirmities, who died to save the race, and who rose again, fathoming our misery and guilt, leaping from the cross and the tomb to the throne of universal and eternal dominion. And by that sign we conquer! *Behrends*.

**2.** *Come, and let us go up.* This expresses the desire of all nations, which was gradually to be awakened, for instruction in the truths of the Messiah's kingdom. *For out of Zion shall go forth a law.* The Hebrew word for *law* literally signifies *instruction*. The old law is not what is here meant, but the *fulfilment* of it (Matt. 5: 17, 18), the teaching of Christ. *The word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* The Gospel was to be preached, in Christ's name, "among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24: 47).

**3.** Isaiah and Micah foretell the operation of the spirit of peace, which was to mark the Redeemer's kingdom, and which was declared at its commencement (Luke 2: 14). It was to be a heaven, surely working from age to age, but, for the present, bearing imperfect results. In proportion to the prevalence of this spirit in men, the Lord is accepted as the umpire between the nations. Disputes are decided by the law of right, not by force. The Lord is at hand so as to reprove and correct them (cf. John 16: 8), so as to avert war. B. C.

**4.** Over against the scenes of war lie the pursuits of peace and the quiet enjoyment of God's good gifts of nature and providence, and

of the fruits of human labor. Each man sits under his own vine and fig-tree; none shall make them afraid. These are the usual Oriental symbols of a state of paradise on earth. H. C.

5. "The Name" means the whole Christ as we know Him, or as we may know Him, from the Book, in the dignity of His Messiahship, in the mystery of His Divinity, in the sweetness of His life, in the depth of His words, in the gentleness of His heart, in the patience and propitiation of His sacrifice, in the might of His resurrection, in the glory of His ascension, in the energy of His present life and reigning work for us at the right hand of God. All these, the central facts of the Gospel, are gathered together into that expression, *the Name*, which is the summing up in one mighty word, so to speak, which it is not possible for a man to utter except in fragments, of all that Jesus Christ is in Himself, and of all that He is and does for us. There is one Name, and one alone, because in the depths of that wondrous nature, in the circumference of that mighty work, there is all that a human heart, or that all human hearts, can need for peace, for nobleness, for holiness, for the satisfaction of all desires, for the direction of efforts, for the stability of its being. The Name stands alone, and it will be the only Name that, at last, shall blaze upon the page of the world's history when the ages are ended; and the chronicles of earth, with the brief "immortality" which they gave to other names of illustrious men, are mouldered into dust. "The Name is above every name," and will outlast them all, for it is the all-sufficient embodiment of everything that a single heart or the whole race can require, desire, conceive or attain. And the uniqueness and solitariness of the Name demands an equal and corresponding exclusiveness of devotion and trust in us. The impulse for a life—the only one that will last, and the only one that will lift—lies in the recognition of the Name. And so our consequent simple duty is honestly, earnestly, prayerfully, always to try to keep ourselves under the influence of that sweet compulsion and mighty encouragement which lie in the Name of Jesus Christ. Our whole life ought to be filled with His Name. You can write it anywhere. All life, the trivialities as well as the crises, may be flashing and bright with the sacred syllables. There is no such decoration for a life as that Christ's Name should be stamped thereon. A. M.

8. We need to distinguish the clothing of ideas from the ideas themselves. That the

great truths of Gospel times and of Christ's millennial reign should be clothed in Jewish imagery and costume ought not to surprise or stumble us. The human mind being what it is, this mode of writing *for Jews and among Jews* is unavoidable, is natural, is indeed the only language that could have been at that time understood.

9. With verse 9 commences a remarkably regular series of prophecies, forecasting great events that were specially to affect the welfare of the Jews down to the coming of Christ, and of the Church of God thenceforward. It is very noticeable that the beginning of each is indicated in our English Bible by the word "*now*," which has its corresponding Hebrew word. It stands at the head of verses 9, 11, and 5:1. Consequently, the distinct predictions are verses 9, 10; verses 11-13; chap. 5:1, and onward substantially through the chapter. Verses 9, 10 speak of the Captivity to Babylon, and the restoration from it; verses 11-13, of the gathering of the great Syrian armies, together with those of some other adjacent powers, against the Jews in the times of the Maccabees, with their heroic defence and final victory; chap. 5, of the siege and fall of Jerusalem, when the sceptre finally departed from Judah; of the Messiah's birth at Bethlehem, and then of His peaceful, triumphant reign, its policy and results. With this summary of the points before us to the end of chap. 5, we may the better understand each separate prophecy.

In the first prediction of this series (verses 9-10) the people are seen in extreme agony; the prophet hears their sharp outcry of anguish, and asks the cause of it. "And where are thy reliances for help? Hast thou no king? no counsellor?" The trouble is, that the city is falling before the fierce Chaldean, and their honored temple and loved homes are in ruins. How much they rested on their king is indicated (Jam. 4:20), where they say of him: "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we had said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." Zedekiah was both weak and wicked, yet he was the Lord's anointed king, and the people, long accustomed to reverence royalty, bemoaned his fall. The twice-repeated "*there*"—"there shalt thou be delivered," "*there* shall the Lord redeem thee," etc., was equivalent to saying, Do not dread this going to Babylon, as if it must be the tomb of all your hopes, for *there* your God will meet you for your deliverance. So in fact it came to pass. Precisely *there* God raised up Cyrus;



precisely at Babylon He gave him those victories which paved the way for the restoration of His people. So true is it that the people of God never need fear to pass under any cloud which the Lord their God may bring up over them. II. C.

**12.** They know not the thoughts of the Lord. When they are gathering together, and Providence favors them in it, they little think what God is designing by it, nor do they understand His counsel; they know what they aim at in coming together, but they know not what God aims at in bringing them together; they aim at Zion's ruin, but God aims at theirs. When men are made use of as instruments of Providence in accomplishing its purposes, it is very common for them to intend one thing, and for God to intend quite the contrary. The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God's hand for the correction of His people, in order for their reformation; howbeit He means not so, nor does His heart think so (Isa. 10: 7). And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God gathers them as sheaves into the floor, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually destroyed, if they had not gathered together against Zion. II.

**13.** There was a terrible significance in these figures when the things they denoted became actual history, when God fired the souls of the heroic, lion-hearted Maccabees, and made "one of them chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight," grinding to powder one after another the huge armies sent upon them by the enraged Syrian king. Remarkably, the Lord promised to turn the spoils of these wars to account toward the wealth of His own kingdom. So it is evermore the Lord's purpose to make the wicked lay up treasures for the just, and coin money, to be consecrated under His providence, though against their intent, unto the Lord of the whole earth.

**Chap. 5.** As already indicated, this chapter records the third in the connected series of consecutive prophecies. It begins with the siege of Jerusalem and the dishonor done to her Judge; advances to the birth of the Messiah, and then to the character and results of His glorious reign on earth.

**1.** The descriptive points in this verse are few; the thronging of her own troops within the city, the siege, the extreme insult offered to the Judge of Israel. The Lord summons the armed hosts of Jerusalem together for battle, and probably of Judah as well; some hostile power besieges the city and inflicts utter

disgrace on the head man of the nation, at that time embodying and representing the government, and called "the Judge of Israel," with allusion to the judges who fell between Joshua and Saul, and were inferior to their kings—showing that already royalty had greatly declined. II. C.

**2.** The force of the verse is, that the Christ was not to have His birth on earth in "the city of David," the capital of Israel, with its royal and glorious associations, but in the humble village of Bethlehem. B. C.—It is called Bethlehem Ephratah, both names of the same city, as appears Gen. 35: 19. It was little among the thousands of Judah, not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants or the figure they made; it had nothing in it worthy to have this honor put upon it; but Christ would give honor to the place of His birth, and not derive honor from it: Though thou be little, yet this shall make thee great; and, as Matthew reads it, Thou art not the least among the princes of Judah, but upon this account art really honorable above any of them. A relation to Christ will magnify those that are little in the world. H.

*From of old, from everlasting.* It is hard to imagine the prophet's intention in using these words, if they mean anything less than the pre-existence of the Messiah. The very same words are used (Prov. 8: 22, 23) where they can have only the meaning which we ascribe to them here; and this the context evidently requires. The Messiah's eternal goings forth are put into contrast with His coming forth from Bethlehem, His humble birthplace. B. C.

**2-4.** This prophecy marks the place of the birth of the Messiah—viz., Bethlehem. Bethlehem Ephratah, or Bethlehem Judah, was the native city of David, that great personal type, as well as the progenitor, of the Messiah. It was now declared to be the birthplace of David's Son, who was also David's Lord. The Jews would be given up to be harassed by their enemies until the time when she—the virgin spoken of by the prophet Isaiah—that was to travail with child should bring forth this deliverer, when the chosen remnant of His people should be united under Him as the Israel of God. This prophecy then marks also the end or destination for which the Messiah should come—viz., to be ruler in Israel—that is to say, over His Church. It declares His Divine nature and the ineffable majesty of His person, whose goings forth have been from eternity. In the former clause He was spoken of as coming forth out of Bethlehem according to His hu-

manity; and in this latter clause, His everlasting coming forth from the Father signifies His eternal co-existence with the Father as His only begotten Son.

This prophecy proclaims also the stability and duration of His reign—"He shall stand and rule in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God." It marks also the extent of His dominions—"He shall be great unto the ends of the earth." The circumstance that afterwards led to the fulfilment of this prophecy respecting the birthplace of the Messiah was a decree published by Augustus Caesar for a general enrolment throughout the Roman empire. On this occasion the mother of Jesus, who then resided at Nazareth of Galilee, was under the necessity of going to Bethlehem with Joseph, to whom she was espoused, to be there enrolled, because they were of the house of David; and there she brought forth her son. Thus the Roman government, totally unconscious of it, was employed to minister, by its decree, to this accomplishment of the purpose of God. *Haldane.*

This prophecy is peculiar in the definiteness with which it states an outward fact in the Messiah's advent, and in the clear certainty with which we know its very early and unambiguous interpretation by the Jews. As a link thus distinguished in the chain of Messianic prophecies, it deserves to be looked at in connection with those that had gone before it in the gradual setting forth of the personality of the Saviour. Step by step it was made known what manner of man He was to be. The rudimentary promise that a deliverer should be born of woman, made immediately after sin had intruded into the world (Gen. 3:15), was followed by a succession of revelations, each more definite than the preceding one. A mysterious hint connects Him with the family of Shem (Gen. 9:27). He was to come of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 22:18); of the seed of Isaac (Gen. 26:4); of the seed of Jacob (Gen. 28:14); of the seed of Judah (Gen. 49:10). A seer of alien race next proclaimed His regal dignity, that He should subdue His enemies, that He should have "the dominion" (Num. 24:17-19). The law was now enlightening the conscience of the people, developing side by side the great fact of sin and its own weakness as a remedy (Rom. 3:20). At the same time, the ceremonies of the law were giving an outline sketch of good things to come in the atonement to be wrought by the one Mediator between God and man, who, as at once priest and victim, was to make that sacrifice of Himself

toward which every type in the services of the altar converged. The giver of the law himself, when he was bringing his own teaching to a conclusion, declared that He who was to come was to be the Teacher who would gain the hearts of the people (De. 18:15; cf. Acts 3:22, 23). The psalmist made known that He was to be the Son of David, one of that royal stock upon which every true-hearted Israelite looked as the centre of his hopes. And now, in the time of Micah, were unveiled in clear terms His eternal glory, His universal dominion, His supreme Godhead, His superhuman birth of a virgin; yet also His sufferings and humiliation (Isa. 7:9; 51). His work also as the Redeemer of the whole race of man was made known (Cf. Rom. 10:11.) In this way the Spirit who moved the prophets was preparing the way for the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, of the Saviour who was the light to lighten the nations and the glory of His people Israel.

In the remarkable unveiling of the purpose of eternal love, which distinguished the time of Hezekiah, Micah joined his voice with that of his elder and more prominent contemporary, Isaiah. It is, however, as unreasonable as it is unjust to regard, as some have done, the prophecy contained in this chapter as an echo of Isaiah's teaching. Its originality is singularly marked in both matter and manner. It stands quite alone in the indubitable evidence we have of the way in which the Jews regarded it before the birth of Christ. When Herod was startled by the inquiries of the Magi, he put the question as to the birthplace of the expected Messiah to the chief priests and scribes. These authorized teachers of the people at once turned to the words of Micah, Matt. 2:4-6. (Cf. John 7:42.) There appears no reason whatever to doubt that this agreed with the universal impression of the Jews in those early times. *B. C.*

2. He (Jehovah) gives up them (His covenant people) in the sense of leaving them to be scourged for their sins and purified under this discipline, until this great Ruler, the Messiah, should be born. "She that travaileth" must refer to the thought in the previous verse, the human birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem. Micah may have had before his mind what Isaiah wrote (7:14), "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." The Divine policy seems to have been to let His apostate Israel sink very low as to its outward estate, and then by this means bring out the more prominently before all the world the great Deliverer.

4. The Hebrew verb "feed" belongs to shepherd life, and includes both feeding and ruling, supplying the want of food and the want of protection and government as well. The attitude of a shepherd is a *standing* one, hence "he shall stand and feed." He shall fulfil this office, not in any merely human might and majesty, but in the strength and majesty of the very God. "And they," His people, His flock, "shall abide," in the sense of permanence and security, not driven about and away into captivity, as they then would have been so recently. One reason why they sit so securely is that their king is "great unto the very ends of the earth." The range of His power sweeps far beyond Judea. It fills the wide world, and leaves no place for nations and armies hostile to the people of the Messiah. II. C.

He shall be a glorious prince, and His subjects shall be happy under His government. He shall stand and feed, He shall both teach and rule, and shall continue to do so, as a good Shepherd, with wisdom, and care, and love; so it was foretold, He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the good Shepherd, that goes before the sheep and presides among them. He shall do this, not as an ordinary man, but in the strength of the Lord, as one clothed with a Divine power, to go through His work and break through the difficulties in His way, so as not to fail, or be discouraged; He shall do it in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God, so as plainly to evidence that God's name was in Him (Ex. 23:21), the majesty of His name, for He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. The prophets prefaced their message with, Thus saith the Lord; but Christ spake not as a servant, but as a Son; Verily, verily, I say unto you. This was feeding in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; all power was given Him in heaven and in earth, a power over all flesh, by virtue of which He still rules in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God, a name above every name. II.

5. "This man," the Messiah, "shall be peace," the fountain and author of peace, and of peace in a sense involving not only the absence of war, but the presence of all the best earthly good and even heavenly good besides. II. C.—Christ is our peace as a priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God; and He is our Peace as a King, conquering our enemies, and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; He creates the

fruit of the lips, peace. Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress and danger, and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet this man may be the peace. In Me, says Christ, you shall have peace, when in the world you have tribulation; at such a time our souls may dwell at ease in Him. II.

This prophecy of Micah is perhaps the most important single prophecy in the Old Testament, and the most comprehensive respecting the personal character of the Messiah and His successive manifestations to the world. It crowns the whole chain of prophecies descriptive of the several limitations of the blessed "Seed of the woman" to the line of Shem, to the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the tribe of Judah, and to the royal house of David, here terminating in His birth at Bethlehem, "the city of David." It carefully distinguishes His human nativity from His eternal generation; foretells the rejection of the Israelites and Jews for a season; their final restoration and the universal "peace" destined to prevail throughout the earth in "the regeneration." It forms therefore the basis of the New Testament, which begins with His human birth at Bethlehem, the miraculous circumstances of which are recorded in the introductions of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels; His eternal generation, as "the Word," in the sublime introduction of St. John's Gospel; His prophetic character, and second coming, illustrated in the four Gospels and epistles, ending with a prediction of the speedy approach of the latter in the Apocalypse (Rev. 22:20). *Dr. Hales*.

7-15. Glorious things are here spoken of the remnant of Jacob; that remnant which was raised of her that halted (chap. 4:7). And it seems to be that remnant which the Lord our God shall call (Joel 2:32), on whom the Spirit shall be poured out; the remnant that shall be saved (Rom. 9:27). God's people are but a remnant, a small number, in comparison with the many that are left to perish, a little flock; but they are the remnant of Jacob, a people in covenant with God, and in His favor. This remnant shall be as dew from the Lord. They shall be of a heavenly extraction, as dew from the Lord, who is the Father of the rain, and has begotten the drops of the dew (Job 38:28). They are born from above, and are not of the earth, savoring the things of the earth. They shall be numerous as the drops of dew in a summer's morning; Ps. 110:3, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." They shall be pure and

clear as the water of life. They shall be produced silently and without noise, as the dew that distils insensibly, we know not how ; such is the way of the Spirit. They shall live in a continual dependence upon God, and be still deriving from Him, as the dew, which carries not for man nor waits for the sons of men ; they should not rely upon human aids and powers, but on Divine grace ; for they are, and own that they are, no more than what the free grace of God makes them every day. They shall be great blessings to those among whom they live, as the dew and the showers are to the grass, to make it grow without the help of man, or the sons of men. Their doctrine, example and prayers shall make them as dew to soften and moisten others and make them fruitful. H.

**8.** *As a lion.* Yet the blessing from above, gently as it came, would have the irresistible strength and vigor of a lion in fulfilling the purpose of Jehovah. What characterizes the Messiah, as well as His works, is the perfect union of force with gentleness. He was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, yet the Lamb of God. B. C.

**10, 11.** These statements show that God's people are not thought of here as fighting with carnal weapons, for if they were, then horses and chariots would come into use. "Cities" must be here thought of in the military sense, parallel to "strongholds." The idea is that the Lord will be Himself their Refuge and Strength, and will take away their confidence in human sources of help. H. C.

## MICAH, CHAPTER VI.

**6:1** HEAR ye now what the LORD saith : Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and  
**2** let the hills hear thy voice. Hear, O ye mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye enduring foundations of the earth : for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will  
**3** plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee ? and wherein have I wearied  
**4** thee ? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed  
**5** thee out of the house of bondage ; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him ; *remember* from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous  
**6** acts of the LORD. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high  
**7** God ? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? shall I give my  
**8** firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.

**9** The voice of the LORD crieth unto the city, and *the man of wisdom* will see thy name :  
**10** hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in  
**11** the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable ? Shall I be pure with  
**12** wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights ? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their  
**13** mouth. Therefore I also have smitten thee with a grievous wound ; I have made thee desolate  
**14** late because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied ; and thy humiliation shall be in the midst of thee : and thou shalt remove, but shalt not carry away safe ; and that which  
**15** thou carriest away will I give up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but shalt not reap ; thou shalt tread the olives, but shalt not anoint thee with oil ; and the vintage, but shalt not  
**16** drink the wine. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels : that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing ; and ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

In this last section (chaps. 6, 7), Jehovah, by a bold poetical figure, is represented as holding a controversy with His people, pleading with them in justification of His conduct toward

them and the reasonableness of His requirements. The dialogue form in which chap. 6 is cast renders the picture very dramatic and striking. The whole concludes with a tri-

umphant song of joy at the great deliverance, like that from Egypt, which Jehovah will achieve, and a full acknowledgment of His mercy and faithfulness to His promises (7: 16-20). The last verse is reproduced in the song of Zacharias (Luke 1: 72, 73). *Die B.*

**Chap. 6.** A grand public hearing of the case made by Jehovah against His covenant people is called for (verse 1); the mountains are summoned to be present (verses 1, 2); the Lord presents His complaint and appeals to His past mercies (verses 3-5); the people ask what they shall do to please God (verses 6, 7); the prophet replies (verse 8), and continues still to expose their sins, and to speak of the judgments inflicted therefor.

**1, 2.** The first verse is the Lord's word to His prophet. "Contend" is used here in the sense of a legal contending—a pleading before a court. This complaint made by Jehovah against His people, the prophet is to bring before the "mountains and the strong foundations of the earth," as if inanimate nature could not fail of having moral sense enough to appreciate the merits of so very plain a case. The scene is sublimely grand—this holding court before the mountains and the strong pillars of the earth, giving them to understand that the Lord has a controversy with His people, and summoning them to hear and pass upon the case. *H. C.*

**3.** The Supreme Lord of heaven and earth appeals to sinners themselves for the mildness and equity of His government, and challenges them to produce one instance of undue severity toward them, or the least shadow of excuse for their undutiful behavior toward Him. "O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me." And doth the infinitely wise God condescend to be tried at the bar of human reason? *R. W.*

**4, 5.** Since they could not show anything that He has done against them, He will show them a great deal that He has done for them, which should have engaged them forever to His service. They are here directed, and we in them, to look a great way back in their reviews of the Divine favor; let them remember their former days, their first days, when they were formed into a people, and the great things God did for them. *H.*

**5.** Remember what answers I put into the mouth of Balaam, the son of Beor; how I drew blessings even from his mouth upon you, instead of curses, which Balak would have hired him to utter against you; remember all My

gracious dealings with you in all the passages of the wilderness, even from Shittim unto Gilgal, till the very entrance into the land of promise; that ye may acknowledge the righteous proceedings of the Lord with you. *Bp. Hall.*

**6, 7.** These are questions put by the people to the prophet. They respond to his rebukes and expostulations with the inquiry, What will meet the demands of the Lord our God? What does He require us to do? Two things are worthy of note in the general cast of these inquiries: (1) That they are deeply shaded with the current thought of the heathen nations round about them, rather than by the tone of the institutes of Moses; and (2) that they seem to imply that the Deity demands offerings of the most costly sort, and penance the most severe—overlooking all the weightier matters of the law—justice and love. *H. C.*

**7.** Man had nothing which could be a compensation or an atonement for his past sins; and after all the efforts, the costly oblations, the gorgeous ceremonials, and the bloody sacrifices, and the painful penances of the pagan world, man is just as far from having made any suitable atonement, as he was when Cain brought his uncommended and unacceptable offering to the offended Creator. And it would have been so to the end of time. Unless man could *do* something or *offer* something that would repair the evils of apostasy, how could he make an atonement for his sins? But this difficulty has been removed. An ample atonement has been made. There is no more that needs to be done; and there is no more that can be done. The atonement is sufficient in its nature for all men. The death of Christ is declared to be the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world." It is expressly affirmed that He "died for all;" that He "tasted death for every man." *Barnes.*

**8.** This is the prophet's brief but exceedingly comprehensive reply. "Do justice" first of all, everywhere and always; then, yet further, toward your fellow-men "show mercy;" do acts of kindness and favor where no merit creates a claim of justice; and finally, as toward God, walk with Him humbly, in constant communion and fellowship. Recognize His surrounding, all pervading presence, and adjust thy spirit and thy life to a due sense of that presence. In the last clause the Hebrew is specially expressive: "*Bow low to walk with God,*" as if only so could sinning mortals hope to come near to the Holy One. Thus, in fewest, briefest words, does the prophet reply, giv-

ing us precisely the great duties which man owes both to his fellow-man and to his God. II. C.

The law might instruct them about sacrifices, and purifications, and the elements of justice and charity ; but it required the trumpet voice of the prophet to remind king and people alike that an obedient spirit is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15 : 22), and that what the Lord requires is not a self-satisfied conformity with written enactments, "but to *do* justly, and to *love* mercy, and to walk *humbly* with thy God." The eternal principles of right and wrong, the *unwritten* law of God, these are the subjects of the prophet's utterance from Samuel to Malachi. *Plummer*.

Here we are plainly told that humble, sincere and conscientious obedience to the will of God is more pleasing and acceptable to Him than all burnt-offering and sacrifices. A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances (Hos. 6 : 6). Obedience is enjoined by the eternal law of nature, but sacrifice only by a positive law ; obedience was the law of innocence, but sacrifice supposes sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified and self more denied by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burned upon the altar than to bring every high thought into obedience to God, and the will subject to His will. II.

The prophet here tells them that they were quite out of the way in thinking to pacify God upon the terms proposed ; that there are other things much better and more pleasing to Him than these sacrifices. For some of them were expressly forbidden by God, as the offering up of children ; and the rest were not good in themselves, but merely by virtue of their institution, and because they were commanded. But the things which he would recommend to them are such as are good in their own nature, and required of us by God on that account. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good." *Abp. Tillotson*.—We have reason all to apply to ourselves these words of the prophet. For though it still be true that some ages of the world have been dark and others blinded with false lights ; that some men naturally see little and others are strangely given to see wrong ; yet in general the duties of life are level to the capacities of all men ; and especially among Christians so peculiarly blessed with the means of instruction as we of this nation are, no one

can possibly, without either deliberate obstinacy or intolerable negligence, continue unacquainted with what he is bound to do, or the recompense he is to expect if he do it not. *Abp. Secker*.

*And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do, &c.* The whole of man's duty is here summed up in three parts : 1. To "do justly" is to give to all their due ; to do in all things what is equal and right, not oppressing any nor defrauding them in any kind of dealing, not to hurt them by word or deed, nor injure them in their persons, estates, or good name, or anything belonging to them. 2. To "love mercy" is not only to give to every one what he might in justice require, but to be kind, merciful, compassionate, exercising all acts of charity and beneficence willingly, cheerfully, and without expecting recompense. 3. To "walk humbly with thy God" is to frame the life and conversation with a view to God's commandments, in a dutiful performance of His will, in a patient resignation to His dispensations, and in a ready assent to His revealed truths. The two first parts comprise the duties of the second table ; the third, those of the first ; together they are a summary of all the Ten Commandments ; and the performance of them is "more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12 : 33). *Dr. Pocock*.

This triple command cannot be dismembered. There may be stern, inflexible justice executed in a merciless manner. There may be mercy without justice or truth. Men have endowed worthy enterprises with money dishonestly acquired. Men have been both just and merciful among their fellows, while ignoring the claims of their Maker. Also notice the order, logical, not that of historic development. In time, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," but here justice is put as the root, mercy the foliage, and godliness the fruit. We are to be just before we are generous. We are more shocked at the profession of godliness without honesty, than we are at seeing honesty without godliness. *Worcester*.

**Do justly.** Private justice between man and man, and family justice between parents and children, masters and servants, and political justice between the magistrates and the people, do all maintain the order of the world, and procure both public and private peace. It is selfishness and injustice, tyranny, oppression, disobedience and rebellion that procure the miseries of the world. But justice is safe and sweet. *Barter*.

It is the law of heaven that you shall not be

able to judge what is wise or easy, unless you are first resolved to judge what is *just*, and to do it. You will say, "Charity is greater than justice." Yes, it is greater: it is the summit of justice—it is the temple of which justice is the foundation. But you can't have the top without the bottom; you cannot build upon charity. You must build upon justice, for this main reason, that you have not at first charity to build with. It is the last reward of good work. Do justice to your brother (you can do that, whether you love him or not), and you will come to love him. But do injustice to him because you don't love him, and you will come to hate him. *Ruskin*.

A just man does justice to every man and everything; and then, if he be also wise, he knows there is a debt of mercy and compassion due to the infirmities of man's nature; and that is to be paid; and he that is cruel or ungentle to a sinning person, and does the worst to him, lies in his debt, and is unjust. Pity, and forbearance, and long suffering, and fair interpretation, and excusing our brother, and taking in the best sense, and passing the gentlest sentence as certainly our duty, and owing to every offender and penitent, as calling to account can be owing to the law, and are first to be paid; and he that does not so is an unjust person. *Bp. Jeremy Taylor*.

Conscientiousness is fundamental and essential to personal goodness. It is the underlying granite of the life, like the granite of the earth, composed of diverse elements fused into one firm substance. *Raleigh*.—Duty is duty, conscience is conscience, right is right, wrong is wrong, whatever sized type they may be printed in. "Large" or "small" are not words for the vocabulary of conscience. *A. M.*

*Walk humbly before God*. Literally it is to "bow low." Thus we feel an invisible presence and power, and have fellowship with the unseen. Walking with God involves five particulars: a choice of Him, as the text says, "before thy God;" a sense of God's actual presence, "Thou God seest me;" prayerfulness; sympathy; and constant dependence. We are to love and hate what God loves and hates. Only as they are agreed can two walk together. Here we are not equals, for God is the Father, and each of us a child. We must "bow low" and become as little children in order to enter the kingdom of God. *Worcester*.—Bernard of Clairvaux gives us the best description that has ever been given of humility; for he says that it is "the grace, whereby out of the truest heart-knowledge a man becomes

vile unto himself." He tells us that "the root of humility is a deep sense of our own utter unworthiness—not making humble speeches about ourselves to others, and pretending to do humble things for others, but having humble thoughts about ourselves in our own hearts, and taking our place with the lowest and least, because we deeply feel that that is the place that belongs of right to us." And Bernard not only gives in this way the true scriptural definition of humility, but he exemplified it in his own life; for while he was the oracle of all Europe, and the highest places and dignities were at his disposal, he declined all worldly advancement, and continued to the end of his life a humble abbot, exercising in all meekness the duties of his office. *Macmillan*.

A Christian is one who shows mercy to all; who is provoked by no wrong; who relieves the wretched, succors the needy; who mourns with mourners, and feels the pain of another as his own; whose wrongful dealing no man feels; who serves God day and night, and ever meditates upon His precepts; who has no deceit in his heart; whose soul is simple and undefiled, and his conscience faithful and pure; whose whole mind rests on God; whose whole hope is fixed on Christ, desiring heavenly rather than earthly things, and leaving human things to lay hold on things Divine. *Fastidius*.

It is perilous to separate thinking rightly from acting rightly. He is already half false who speculates on truth and does not do it. Truth is given, not to be contemplated, but to be done. Life is an action—not a thought. And the penalty paid by him who speculates on truth is that by degrees the very truth he holds becomes to him a falsehood. There is no truthfulness, therefore, except in the witness borne to God by doing His will—to live the truths we hold, or else they will be no truths at all. *F. W. R.*

The highest reach of faith is loving, intelligent consecration of all our life to the will of God. We are to have desires, but they should be held in subordination to God's desires and thoughts for us. We are to have plans, but they should be laid down at God's feet, that He may either let us work them out for Him or show us His plan for us instead of our own. Complete consecration of our will to God's—that is the standard of Christian living at which we are to aim. *J. R. M.*

We have only to remember that the "earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein," to see that

if a man is engaged in any sort of occupation which tends, in however humble a manner, to replenish the earth and bring out its fulness to benefit the world or any of its inhabitants, he is engaged in the Lord's service, and may do, and ought to do, what he is doing "as unto the Lord." No matter what kind of service he is rendering, whether he is ministering to bodily or intellectual or spiritual wants, whether he is making shoes or sermons—and it is far better work for God to make a good shoe than a poor sermon—pictures or plms, provided only he is doing some good in God's world, he may, and ought to, look upon his work as service rendered to the great Ruler of the world and King of men, and therefore may do it, not only without interfering with, but in fulfilment of the claim God makes on the supreme devotion of the heart and life. *J. M. Gibson*

There is glory everywhere in life if only we have eyes to see it. The humblest lot affords room for the noblest living. There is opportunity in the most commonplace life for splendid heroisms, for angelic ministries, for fullest and clearest revealings of God. "Every day," says Goethe, "is a vessel into which a great deal may be poured, if we will actually fill it up—that is, with thoughts and feelings and their expression into deeds as elevated and amiable as we can reach to." The days are well enough; it is with ourselves whether we make them radiant and beautiful, whether we fill them with life. A mere dreamy treadmill round—waking, eating, drinking, walking, working, sleeping—is not enough to make any life worthy; we must put the glory of love, of best effort, of sacrifice, of prayer, of upward looking and heavenward reaching, into the dull routine of our life's every day, and then the most humdrum and uneventful life will be made splendid with the glory of God. . . .

A secret of sweet and happy Christian life is in learning to live by the day. It is the long stretches that tire us. We think of life as a whole, running on for years, and it seems too great for us. We cannot carry this load until we are threescore and ten. We cannot fight this battle continually for half a century. But really there are no long stretches. Life does not come to us in lifetimes; it comes only a day at a time. Even to-morrow is never ours till it becomes to-day, and we have nothing whatever to do with it but to pass down to it a fair and good inheritance in to-day's work well done and to-day's life well lived. It is a blessed secret, this of living by the day. Any one can carry his burden, however heavy, till nightfall.

Any one can do his work, however hard, for one day. Any one can live sweetly, quietly, patiently, lovingly and purely, till the sun goes down. And that is all life really means ever to any of us—just one little day. Said Charles Kingsley, "Do to-day's duty, fight to-day's temptation, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things which you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them." God gives us nights to shut down the curtain of darkness on our little days. We cannot see beyond, and we ought not to try to. Short horizons make life easier, and give us one of the blessed secrets of brave, true, holy living.

These are some of the secrets of a beautiful life. We ought not to be content to live otherwise than beautifully. We can live our life only once. We cannot go over it again, to correct its mistakes or amend its faults. We ought therefore to live it well. And to do this we must begin at the beginning, and make every day radiant and lovely as it passes. Lost days must always remain blanks in the records, and stained days must carry their stains. Beautiful days make beautiful years, and beautiful years make a beautiful life at its close. *J. R. Miller.*

Let a man, then, go forth, day by day, from whatever refreshments of feeling he may indulge in, to the rough work of actual life; let him go with a contented cheerfulness to whatever business or calling God has made his; let him determine in all things to do the right, and to do it unto God; let him steadfastly set himself to be conscientious, true, faithful and loyal, in word and deed, to duty and to Christ; let him sometimes pause in the course of the day, just to cast a look on some gush of light that will come at his call from the truth that is in him, to offer an ejaculation, to realize the nearness and observance of God, and to give for the moment a distinct consciousness to his intention to please Him; let a man do this, and he will find that the world itself will be to him a church; the streets of the city as the aisles of a cathedral; his worldly life, a spiritual worship; his business engagements, the service of a priesthood! Daily work, thus discharged, however it may seem in itself, will be to him to whom it is done fragrant as altar incense, melodious as the voice of a psalm! *T. Binney.*

You cannot set the world right, or the times, but you can do something for the truth, and all you can do will certainly tell if the work you do is for the Master who gives you your share, and so the burden of responsibility is



lifted off. This assurance makes peace, satisfaction, and repose possible even in the partial work done upon earth. Go to the man who is carving a stone for a building; ask him where is that stone going, to what part of the temple, and how is he going to get it into its place, and what does he do? He points you to the builder's plans. This is only one stone of many. So, when men shall ask where and how is your little achievement going into God's great plan, point them to the Master, who keeps the plans, and then go on doing your little service as faithfully as if the whole temple were yours to build. *Phillips Brooks.*

It requires more strength to be faithful in the ninety and nine commonplace duties, when no one is looking on, when there is no special motive to stir the soul to its best effort, than it does in the one duty which, by its unusual importance, or by its conspicuousness, arouses enthusiasm for its own doing. It is a great deal easier to be brave in one stern conflict which calls for heroism, and in which large interests are involved, than to be habitually brave in the thousand little struggles of the common days, for which it seems scarcely worth while to put on the armor. It is very much less a task to be good-natured under one great provocation, in the presence of others, than it is to keep sweet-tempered month after month of other days, amid the frictions, strifes, and petty annoyances and cares of home life or business life.

So it is not from conspicuous deeds of life that the blessings chiefly come which make the world better, sweeter, happier, but from the countless lowly ministries of the every days—the little faithfulnesses that fill long years. We could lose out of the world's life its few great, brilliant deeds, and not be much the poorer; but to lose the uncounted faithfulnesses of the millions of common lives would leave this earth a cold and dreary place indeed in which to live. There ought to be both cheer and instruction in these glimpses of the glory and blessing of the every day of life. Most of us can expect to do only plain and commonplace things. Only a few people can become famous. Only a rare deed now and then can have its honor proclaimed from the hill-tops. Only a day or two in a life, with most of us, can be brightened by the light of popular praise. It is a comfort to reflect that it is the common life of the every-day that in God's sight is the truest and best, and that does the most to bless the world. *J. R. Miller.*

9. "The wise will regard Thy name"—what-

ever fools may do or may not. The prophet assumes that the unwise will not regard the name of Jehovah. The exhortation is, "Hear ye the rod!"—the lessons taught by the Lord's rod of discipline—and so learn to know Him who has appointed it, and who directs its mission in a sinning world. II. C.—God speaketh by the rod beyond all the eloquence of words. Hear ye the rod. The voice of God is His rod, that speaks so loud from heaven in many strokes that the profanest sinners are sometimes forced to hear and acknowledge it. *Caryl.*

10. The Hebrew people seem to have been strangely addicted to falsifying by unjust weights and measures, although their statute law most expressly forbade it. (See Lev. 19: 35, 36 and De. 25: 13-16.) Other passages note the prevalence of this sin, and strongly condemn it (Prov. 11: 1; 20: 10; Hos. 12: 7 and Amos 8: 5). II. C.

Of course, the plain lesson these texts are meant to teach is, that all cheating in weights and measures is hateful to God. Those who are guilty of it commit an injustice against man, and they provoke God's anger. We have got into a bad habit of being amused by the dishonest tricks to which many tradesmen resort in their haste to get rich. These texts teach that every trick of this kind is observed by God's eye, is recorded in God's book, and will be punished by God's hand. . . . A further thought is that God's laws for our conduct to each other are a revelation of His own character, and are in strict analogy to the laws which determine His own action toward His creatures. The time is coming when He will judge every man; and He will use no false balance. He will put into the scales no light weights. He is merciful as well as just, but *now* is the time for mercy. When He judges He will judge righteously. He will "weigh" the reasons and motives which led men to neglect public worship and private prayer. He will "weigh" the temptations which betray us into sin against the considerations which should have led us to do right. He will "weigh" our love for Himself and our obedience to His law against His infinite grace; our trust in His goodness and submission to His hand in times of trouble against His "exceeding great and precious promises;" our religious earnestness, our loyalty to Christ, our triumphs over sin, against the sanctifying power of Christian truth and the grace of the Holy Ghost. We might well tremble in the anticipation of the hour when, one by one, we shall wait for the Divine

sentence on our deeds ; but our rest and hope are fixed in this, that the critical act of the soul, in God's judgment, is its acceptance or rejection of the mercy of the Lord Jesus ; and that if we trust in Him we shall not only be justified by

faith in this world, but shall be so strengthened for all good works that God Himself, when He looks at our deeds, will be able to say, " Well done, good and faithful servants ; enter ye into the joy of your Lord." *R. W. Dale.*

## MICAH, CHAPTER VII.

**7:1** WOE is me ! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage : there is no cluster to eat ; my soul desireth the firstripe fig. The godly man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men ; they all lie in wait for blood ; they hunt every man his brother with a net. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently ; the prince asketh, and the judge *is ready* for a reward ; and the great man, he uttereth the mischief of his soul : thus they weave it together. The best of them is as a brier : the most upright is *worse* than a thorn hedge : the day of thy watchmen, even thy visitation, is come ; now shall be their perplexity. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide ; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law ; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

But as for me, I will look unto the LORD ; I will wait for the God of my salvation : my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy : when I fall, I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him ; until he plead my cause, and execute judgement for me : he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness. Then mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her ; which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God ? Mine eyes shall behold her ; now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

**11, 12** A day for building thy walls ! in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day shall they come unto thee, from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and from sea to sea, and *from* mountain to mountain. Yet shall the land be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

**14** Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily, in the forest in the midst of Carmel ; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might : they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent ; like crawling things of the earth they shall come trembling out of their close places : they shall come with fear unto the LORD our God, and shall be afraid because of thee. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have compassion upon us ; he will tread our iniquities under foot : and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

**Chap. 7.** The course of thought in this chapter embraces the prophet's distress (verse 1) : its causes in the extreme wickedness of the people (verses 2-4) ; so great that no confidence can be reposed in man, not even in best friends (verses 5, 6) ; but should be in God (verse 7). Trusting in her God, Zion exults over her enemies (verses 8, 9), who are covered with shame (verse 10) ; enlargement for Zion (verses 11, 12),

albeit judgments have come and must come for her sins ; the prophet's prayer (verse 14) ; and the Lord's answer (verses 15-17) ; the prophet testifies in sublime strains to God's pardoning mercy, and the people respond (verses 18-20).

**1.** The prophet gives expression to his sadness, grief and disappointment, by comparing his case to that of a man longing for the first ripe fruits, but who finds the summer fruits

all gathered, the grapes all gleaned, and not a cluster left for his hunger. The state of things among the people which causes him such grief and disappointment, he proceeds to describe. H. C.

**2.** The good man is a godly man, and a merciful man; the word signifies both. Those are completely good men that are devout toward God, and compassionate and beneficent toward men: that love mercy, and walk with God. These are perished, and there are none risen up in their stead, that tread in their steps; honesty is banished, and there is no such thing as a good man to be met with. Those that were of religious education are degenerated, and become as bad as the worst.

**3.** The magistrates, who by their office ought to have been the patrons and protectors of right, were the practisers and promoters of wrong, that they may do evil with both hands earnestly, to excite and animate themselves in it, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh, for a reward, for a bribe, with which they will be hired to exert all their power for the supporting and carrying on of any wicked design with both hands.

**4.** And if this be the character of the best and most upright, what are the worst? And when things are come to this pass, the day of the watchmen comes—that is, as it follows, the day of thy visitation, when God will reckon with thee for all this wickedness; which is called the day of the watchmen, because their prophets, whom God set as watchmen over them, had often warned them of that day. When all flesh have corrupted their way, even the best and the most upright, what can be expected but a day of visitation, a deluge of judgments, as that which drowned the old world when the earth was filled with violence? H.

**5, 6.** The gloomy description is resumed. The corruption reaches to the innermost recesses of society. Confidence is extinct. The dearest of human relationships are out of joint. On the use made by our Lord of the words of verse 6, see on Matt. 10: 35, 36; Luke 12: 53. B. C.

**5.** All other friendships are but fragments; Christ's is the perfect friendship. Back of the sweet, gentle humanities in Him, which make it so easy for us to come to Him and repose in Him, is the might of the eternal God. The humanity comes very close to us, and it is for us to lay our heads upon its bosom. Then when we lean on Him we are lifted up in the arms of Omnipotence. J. R. M.

**7-13.** The prophet, having sadly complained

of the wickedness of the times he lived in, here fastens upon some considerations for the comfort of himself and his friends in reference thereunto. The case is bad, but it is not desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. H.

**7.** *I will look.* The soul of the faithful still holds fast her faith, in spite of the darkness. The promises of Jehovah cannot fail. Salvation will surely come. Prayers cannot fail to be answered.

**8.** The enemy whose insolent exultation is here deprecated is the antichrist, the imperial tyranny ever in antagonism with the true, faithful Israel. In Micah's time this was represented by Asshur (verse 12), in John's time by Rome. The faithful realize that the darkest moment of the night may be that which just precedes the dawn. B. C.

Rejoice, ye good soldiers of Jesus Christ; your King not only witnesses from His throne in the heavens the contest in which you are engaged, but cheers you on with His presence, encourages you by His example, animates you by His promises, stretches over you the impenetrable shield of His righteousness, and insures you by His grace of final conquest. Well, then, may you exclaim with the Jewish prophet, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me;" or break forth into the exulting language of the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." Nor will the glorious Captain and Leader rest satisfied until He has conducted forward the work of grace in the souls of His people to its final consummation in eternal glory. *Symington.*

**9, 10.** The true believing heart finds strength to endure and sure hope of reconciliation in the consciousness that her own sins are the cause of her affliction, and in faith in the righteousness of the Lord. B. C.

**9.** The faith, patience and valor of God's soldiers are best known in times of exercise; then how animating to view the love and trust to the faithfulness of a covenant God! To see a Father's love to the soul, in the rod of His displeasure against sin, how supporting! I will bear the chastisements of my Father; my sins deserve them. My mouth is stopped; I have nothing to plead; guilt silences me. "Until He plead my cause." It is the dear Advocate

Jesus, the ever-precious pleader for sinners. The sacred pages ever testify of His blessed name and soul-comforting work. He never intermits His plea for the life of the soul. He prevails over all the desert of sin, by His atonement and intercession. Shortly He will speak destruction to all sin by the word of His power. In the mean time, He sends His Spirit, the Comforter, the third person in the glorious Trinity. "He will bring me forth to the light." Here see Old Testament faith in New Testament love. It is the Spirit's office to bring souls out of the dark dungeon of nature's sorrows, to see Jesus the Light of life. "I shall behold His righteousness." Then it is a day of comfort after a night of distress. Is the righteousness of Jesus mine? am I righteous by that in the sight of God? Then, truly, it is in righteousness God dealeth with me, and will save me. This faith humbles the soul to the dust, strips it of proud murmurings and self-righteous pleas, and inspires it with boldness at a throne of grace. This is the confident plea of faith: "For Thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. Destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Thy servant" (Ps. 143: 11, 12). *W. Mason.*

**11, 12.** These verses obviously speak of blessings upon Zion in the day when the Lord, having turned again her captivity, shall rebuild her walls, bring home her captives from afar, and with them also "the forces of the Gentiles."

**13.** The sense is: Notwithstanding these glorious promises of future enlargement, every way adapted to inspire high and brilliant anticipations, yet bear in mind "that for the great sins of the people, an age of judgment and desolation will surely intervene. Before those better days shall come, the land will lie a long time desolate as the fruit of the people's sins." A caution against abusing these promises.

**14.** The word rendered "*feed*" is pastoral—the usual term to describe the service of the shepherd. It, therefore, combines the two ideas—feeding, and ruling, or guiding. Hence to the Hebrews there would be no incongruity in supposing this feeding to be done with the "rod"—which is here the shepherd's crook; not a rod for scourging. The sense of the verse is: Take charge of Thy people as a shepherd of his flock; they are Thine heritage; let them feed in rich pastures as of old. **II. C.**

The verse is thus perspicuously paraphrased by Bishop Hall: "In the mean time—viz., of the desolation of the land, O God, take Thou

care of Thy people: O do Thou feed and govern them by Thy gracious protection; lead Thou this flock of Thine heritage, which now dwell solitarily in the wilderness of their captivity, into the midst of Thy fruitful pastures of Carmel; let them feed in the rich fields of Bashan and Gilead, as in former times." The words imply a gracious promise of return out of captivity to their own land; and that under the protection of God they should abundantly enjoy all things conducing to their well being, set forth under the similitude of sheep feeding in rich pastures. However, all these good things promised to the Jews are in a higher manner made good to the Church of Christ, and all faithful believers rescued from sin and Satan and brought back into the fold; who, as He saith, shall be saved under His protection, and go in and out and find pasture. *Dr. Pocock.*

**15.** The prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them; but God answers that He will show them marvellous things, will do for them more than they are able to ask or think, will outdo their hopes and expectations: He will show them His marvellous loving-kindness (Ps. 17: 7). **II.**

**16, 17.** Here are the effects on the Gentile nations of God's marvellous deliverances to be wrought for His people. They shall see and shall be ashamed of their own insignificant prowess. They may be supposed to say: "We have no power to cope with that; all our strength vanishes away before such marvellous works."

**18.** This language is full of beauty and of strength as well. "Who is a God like Thee, taking away sin" (to be seen and noted no more), "passing over the transgressions of the remnant of His chosen" (as a traveller *passes by* what he does not wish to notice); "and He does not make His wrath strong forever" (implying that He does the very opposite—makes it subside and give place to loving-kindness). And all this "because He delighteth in mercy," finding His real bliss, even the highest joy of His heart, in forgiving the chief of sinners. **II. C.**

The reasons why God pardons sin, and keeps not His anger forever, are all taken from within Himself; it is because He delights in mercy, and the salvation of sinners is what He has pleasure in, not their death and damnation. The glory of God in forgiving sin is, as in other things, matchless, and without compare. In this His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours; in this He is God, and not man. All those that have experienced pardoning

mercy cannot but admire that mercy : it is what we have reason to stand amazed at, if we know what it is. Has God forgiven us our transgressions ? We may well say, Who is a God like unto Thee ? Our holy wonder of pardoning mercy will be a good evidence of our interest in it. II.

It is not the vaine of the blessings of salvation themselves, unspeakable though that value is, that constitutes the most affecting display of the love and grace that are in the heart of God. It is not merely that " God hath given to us eternal life," but that " this life is in His Son." It is not " redemption" merely, but " redemption through His blood" that manifests the exuberance of Divine mercy. The Son of God Himself is God's " unspeakable gift;" His chief mercy to a fallen world ; a boon of such incalculable vastness of amount, as to throw every other into shade, and to furnish a sure pledge for all else that we can ever possibly need : " He who spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ?" It were a contradiction to imagine anything else withheld. A gift, in itself Divine, may well ensure to us whatever is created. *Rolph Wardlaw.*

The prevailing representation of the Divine character places mercy, compassion, kindness, tenderness among its foremost attributes. Heathen poets have sounded the depths of human sorrow, passion and pity ; but nowhere in pagan literature, least of all in the religious books of heathendom, can we catch even the echo of that full-toned tenderness and gracious comfort which rings through the Hebrew Scriptures, assuring us that " the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." *Conder.*

19. God will turn from scourging to blessing, when His smitten people *turn* from their sins to righteousness. " He will have compassion upon us." Such a God, so full of loving pity, how can it be otherwise ? " He will subdue our iniquities," the original word for " subdue" implying that He will tread them down under His feet—as an apostle said, " He will tread Satan under your feet shortly." Sin, personified, commanding its forces of temptation, is thought of as a powerful foe of man, as his arch enemy, perpetually ensnaring, assailing, enslaving down and piercing through with bitter pangs ; but God subdues this enemy ; He withstands his efforts ; sets Himself to counteract his temptations, and becomes Himself a strong tower of refuge, whither His people may fly and into which

they may run and be safe ! O how inexpressibly precious ! " Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," and they go down like a millstone, to rise no more ! The idea is, that they come up no more to remembrance—as the Lord has said, " Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more !" (Heb. 8 : 12). Considering that the Infinite Mind of the universe never has lost from its thought and knowledge one fact, however minute, and never can, this statement seems most wonderful of all. God would have us feel that He does not remember against us the sin which we have fully repented of and heartily forsaken, and which therefore He has altogether forgiven and put away. He would almost lead us to think that He can forget them and has forgotten them, so that they shall come before His mind even in memory no more ! O how divinely kind and gracious is this ! How like a tender Father ! That He should labor to dispel from our mind those painful feelings of shame and grief over our sins, and should seem to say, " Come near to Me and be My free-hearted, loving child, as welcome to My smiles and confidence and favor as if you had never sinned against Me !" Let this infinite Friend, so kind and so gracious, be loved, trusted and adored by us all, forever and ever !

20. Here the book closes, affirming that such a God will surely perform all the good things, the truth and the mercy promised to the fathers long years ago. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, caught the spirit as well as the leading words of this passage : " To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant," etc. (Luke 1 : 72). II. C.

He will perfect that which concerns us, and with this good work will do all that for us which our case requires, and which He has promised : " Then wilt Thou perform Thy truth to Jacob, and Thy mercy to Abraham." It is in pursuance of the covenant that our sins are pardoned and our lusts mortified ; from that spring all these streams flow, and with these He shall freely give us all things. The promise is said to be mercy to Abraham, because, as made to Him first, it was mere mercy, preventing mercy, considering what state it found him in. But it was truth to Jacob, because the faithfulness of God was engaged to make good to him and his seed, as heirs to Abraham, all that was graciously promised to Abraham. See here : 1. With what solemnity the covenant of grace is ratified to us ; it was not only spoken, written and sealed, but, which is the highest confirmation, it was sworn to our

fathers ; nor is it a modern project, but is confirmed by antiquity too, it was sworn from the days of old ; it is an ancient charter. 2. With what satisfaction it may be applied and relied upon by us ; we may say with the highest assurance, Thou wilt perform the truth and mercy, not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground ; faithful is He that has promised, who also will do it. H.

It is the observation of an ancient Jewish author that there is not any denunciation of hard things to Israel, which is not concluded with promises of mercy. Among other instances from Moses, Hosea, Joel, Amos Jeremiah, he brings this conclusion of Micah's prophecy. And very remarkable indeed is this conclusion, which, to show how greatly God delights in mercy, is uttered in words giving assurance of mercy, not only to Israel after the flesh on their repentance, but to all who shall, by faith in Christ, the promised Seed, lay hold on His promise made to Abraham, and in Him to all the kindreds of the earth. *Pocock.*

In the uttermost darkness there is light. Affliction exerts its remedial power. A new and better spirit awakes in smitten Israel—of humility, penitence, longing to atone and regain God's favor. Gradually assurance that God's purpose cannot be frustrated, though it may

be delayed, supervenes. The Divine voice is heard promising restoration and a more glorious future than ever the past has known. And so the book ends in an exquisite prayer of trustful desire, and a magnificent confession of faith in the transcendency of God in His attributes of mercy and of truth.

The Messianic idea of Micah is a remarkably developed one, though he has not fully worked out the process by which it is to be reached. For its basis he takes the idealized picture of the heroic, happy, united empire of King David, in which the corruption, extremes of wealth and poverty, foreign humiliation, and internal miseries of the present age were unknown. His vision is that of the kingdom of God, though clothed in earthly forms, and cramped by temporal limitations. Its foundations are justice, mercy, and the fear of God ; its destiny world-wide dominion ; and the issue peace, prosperity and righteousness. The whole bright dream centres round a kingly figure that emerges from the eternal purpose of God, after the flesh of Bethlehem origin like David, but clothed with attributes and powers Divine. No wonder that in many features of the story of Jesus of Nazareth we catch echoes of the Book of Micah, all along that pathway of glory and of shame that stretches from the cradle of Bethlehem to the agony of Gethsemane and the cross of Calvary. *Elmslie.*

## PROPHECY OF NAHUM.

### NAHUM, INTRODUCTION ; CHAPTER I.

1:1 THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

- 2 The LORD is a jealous God and avengeth ; the LORD avengeth and is full of wrath ; the
- 3 LORD taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the *guilty* ; the LORD hath
- 4 his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers : Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt ; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.
- 6 Who can stand before his indignation ? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ?
- 7 his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him. The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble ; and he knoweth them that put their trust in him. But
- 8 with an overrunning flood he will make a full end of the place thereof, and will pursue his
- 9 enemies into darkness. What do ye imagine against the LORD ? he will make a full end :

10 affliction shall not rise up the second time. For though they be like tangled thorns, and be  
 11 drenched as it were in their drink, they shall be devoured utterly as dry stubble. There is  
 one gone forth out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, that counselleth wickedness.  
 12 Thus saith the Lord: Though they be in full strength, and likewise many, even so shall  
 they be cut down, and he shall pass away. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee  
 13 no more. And now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.  
 14 And the Lord hath given commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown:  
 out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image; I will  
 15 make thy grave; for thou art vile. Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bring-  
 eth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows: for  
 the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

### *Introduction.*

THE introduction to this short book gives us only the general subject—a prediction of sore calamity on Nineveh; the name of the author and the place of his residence, or perhaps nativity. The location of the book in the series of minor prophets probably had some reference to its date; but the internal evidence in the line of historic allusion is our main reliance. This goes to place him a little after Micah. His great theme being the fall of Nineveh, there can be no reasonable doubt that he wrote soon after the famous invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, and the utter overthrow of his army. That this event had thrilled the nation may be seen in numerous passages of Isaiah—*e.g.*, 10: 24-34; 14: 24-27; 17: 12-14; 33: 36-39. Hence, naturally, the Lord, by His prophets, sought to turn these signal events to the best moral account. Isaiah, though alluding to these transactions so often, had yet mostly passed over the retribution which the Lord would one day bring on Nineveh. This was left for Nahum. It was important, for the best moral impression on the people, that this should be revealed, and indeed that it should be written and made public soon after the invasion by Sennacherib and the defeat of his army—at least before the first impressions made by those events had passed away. Now, this great invasion was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (2 K. 18: 13), whose reign of twenty-nine years fell B.C. 728-699—consequently, about B.C. 714, and Nahum would be located in time during the latter part of Hezekiah's reign. The fall of Nineveh, which Nahum so vividly describes, chaps. 2 and 3, took place from seventy-five to eighty years after the date assumed for this prophecy. It fell before the allied forces of the Medes under Cyaxares and the Chaldeans under Nabopolassar, the precise date being assigned by the most reliable historians to B.C. 625.

All the critics accord to Nahum a style of

lofty sublimity and a power of graphic painting rarely surpassed. He wrote as one whose very soul was permeated and thrilled by the great events of his time, and who saw God's hand in them—a present and glorious power for salvation to His people, and for vengeance on their foes. To see the beauty and feel the force of his book, we shall need to imbue our hearts deeply with the true spirit and significance of those momentous facts of history. II. C.

The word Nahum probably means the comforter, and in conformity with the name the prophet's oracle is a message of consolation. In form it is an impassioned anticipation of the destruction of Assyrian Nineveh, the oppressor of God's people, but its inner motive is an undying faith in God's redemptive purpose, and its destination to comfort the heart of Israel, well nigh sick with hope so long deferred. *Elmslie.*

The prophecy of Nahum finds its place at the close of the activity of Isaiah and Micah. It fittingly concludes the prophecy of the Assyrian period in Judah. Taking its stand upon the character of Jehovah, it emphasizes His justice toward the heathen world-power, as represented in Assyrian Nineveh. The character of Jehovah must condition His attitude and action toward the heathen, as well as toward Israel-Judah. Herein is found hope and comfort for His people. The comparatively recent explorations in the East, uncovering the site and bringing to light the contemporary history of this heathen capital, together with the continued advance in Assyrian researches, cannot but render the study of this book peculiarly interesting and instructive. Nineveh, uncovered from her mounds, stands before us as she was in the days of the prophet. Thus "the Bible and the Monuments" are mutually interpreting one another. *Burroughs.*

It was the great lesson of the Book of Jonah that the righteous government of God extends also to heathen nations. During one of the most eventful periods of Jewish history we find

Assyria constantly appearing as the great world-power whose rapidly extending empire was destined finally to crush one part of the chosen nation, while the other was to have as remarkable a deliverance. Thus intimately connected with Israel, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, became also herself the proper object of prophecy; and while Jonah teaches us that there is mercy even for those not in covenant with God, if they repent, Nahum completes the representation of the Divine justice by showing that if they relapse into sin punishment will as inevitably overtake them. R. P. S.

The prophet Jonah was sent to Nineveh to preach repentance, and was listened to. Nahum has no single word of comfort or of sympathy for the guilty city that had fallen back into the sins for which she had been rebuked and for which she had humbled herself. The title of his prophecy is *The burden of Nineveh*. It is no ordinary disaster that he foretells. It is not conquest or overthrow only; it is annihilation: *He will make an utter end of the place thereof* (1 : 8, 9). B. C.

Nahum's threats against Nineveh were remarkably fulfilled. Before the year B.C. 606 she had ceased to exist, for Jeremiah does not mention Nineveh among the nations which are doomed to drink the cup of the Lord. Esarhaddon II., whom the Greeks call Sarakos, was the last king of Nineveh. The Medes with the Babylonians and Scythians first razed all the surrounding fortresses and beleaguered the city. The Ninevites proclaimed a fast of one hundred days to propitiate their gods, but the city fell. The description of the siege by Ktesias accords with the brief allusions of Nahum. The last night of the besieged was spent in drunken orgies (Nahum 1 : 10; 2 : 5), in which the effeminate king set the example. Only at the last moment did he arouse himself to give directions for the protection of the city from assault. The catastrophe was precipitated by an overflow of the Tigris, which made a breach in the walls (1 : 18; 2 : 7), and then the king, recognizing his destiny, burned himself alive in his palace, and the city was plundered of its rich spoil. It vanished from history totally and at once, so that those who passed over its ruins saw the visible proofs of the wrath of God. The wrecks of its former splendor began to be revealed to the world in 1842 by Layard and Botta. *Farrar*.

It should not be forgotten that when the prophet wrote, the world had never witnessed or imagined such an overthrow of a great city. Nor could it have reasonably been anticipated

that commerce would have forsaken its old emporium. Yet so it has been. Mosul has flourished within sight of ruined Nineveh, and her delicate fabrics, called *muslins*, have made her name famous among the nations of Western Europe. B. C.

The oracle of Nahum is one continuous utterance, not to be broken into separate elements, but the embodiment of a single inspiration, forceful, rounded and complete. Every attempt to dismember it is a failure. Its unity and genuineness are acknowledged on all hands. Only the first part of the superscription has been questioned. But there is nothing unnatural in the title assigning, correctly, first the subject of the prophecy, and then its author. The piece is of the nature of a highly poetical and imaginative composition, is indeed an inspired vision. Clearly cut divisions can hardly be marked out, but it is probable that eight stages may be detected in the stately march of the seer's conception.

Over against the Assyrian power with its gigantic pagan might he sees God, the vindicator of right, the avenger of wrong, the final judge of all human issues. Slow to strike, because He is so strong, He is nevertheless relentlessly just. He wields the powers of the air, commands the waters, controls the soil, makes the solid earth tremble, and rules among men omnipotent, resistless (1 : 2-6). This God, faithful to friends, fearful to foes, annihilating the most formidable resistance, has been thwarted and defied by Assyria, and therefore will utterly destroy her (1 : 7-12). Judah, so long oppressed, shall be set free by the Divine overthrow of the Assyrian, and already may rejoice in the happy release, for sure alike are the downfall of the foe and the restoration of crippled Israel (1 : 13; 2 : 2). The taking of the city is now depicted before our eyes, with lightning-like rapidity, in a series of vivid pictures of the muster of the contending forces, the assault, the sudden collapse of the defences, the seizure of the palace, the capture and flight of the inhabitants (2 : 3-8). Next comes the sack and pillage of the wealthy city, the emptiness and sickening desolation, the weird contrast with the time when it was like a great lion's den gorged with the plunder of its devastating armies, for God has risen against her and made an utter end of her might, her wealth, and her empire, that were gathered and built up out of bloodshed and violence unending (2 : 9; 3 : 1).

Once again the seer calls up in living images the din and terror of the conflict, and the fatal completeness of the defeat, and figuring the



heartless capital as a cruel courtesan, that has devoured the fortunes and lives of the nations, he exults in the terrible humiliation of her haughtiness, and the contumely and implied shame of her overthrow (3: 2-7). By the example of her own destruction of mighty Thebes, the royal residence of her great rival Egypt, he asserts the possibility of the catastrophe, and founds its certainty on her impotence in the hour of need, the fall of her fortresses, the demoralization of her soldiers, and the failure and destruction of her last defences (3: 8-13). Finally he taunts her with her helplessness, pictures the destruction of her commerce, the scattering of her potentates, the dispersion of her populace, and the relief and rejoicing that her fall will create in all nations, for wide as the world has been the curse of her oppression (3: 14-19).

Improbable as it seemed to earthly reason in the height of Assyria's prosperity, that the great empire should within half a century crumble to pieces, and that the splendid capital with its titanic military strength and its vast commerce, standing as it did on the great highway between east and west, should be not merely deprived of its supremacy, but captured and destroyed and obliterated by fire and water and time, till the very place of it was forgotten, this has in the complete fulness of its terror come true, and may be read not only in the pages of history, but still more graphically in the calcined, weather-worn relics of Nineveh's long-vanished greatness, that have been laid bare in the recently discovered and partially disinterred ruins of the ancient Assyrian capital. *Einsiedle*.

**Chap. I.** After the briefest possible introduction, the prophet breaks into the midst of his theme, his starting-point being most fitly those great qualities of the Divine character which both the recent events of history and the burden of his prophecy conspire to illustrate—especially His retributive vengeance upon His enemies, coupled with His merciful protection and deliverance of His people. Hence we have mainly God's judgments on His foes (verses 2-6); God a refuge for His people (verse 7); the overthrow of Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem (verses 8-14); and the ensuing peace and joy (verse 15).

1. A "burden" in prophecy, here as elsewhere, is a message of calamity, predicting judgment and desolation. II. C.—It is a *vision* of that which, as a mere man, he could not see. He speaks of that which had been shown to him by the Lord. He describes that which had been revealed to him. B. C.

2. It should be borne in mind that these at-

tributes of Jehovah are suggested by His retributive justice on Assyria, first, in destroying her great army when it came proudly and defiantly to lay waste the holy city; and next, in the future desolations of Nineveh, their great and proud capital. These historic facts may serve as illustrations of the sense in which He "taketh vengeance."

3. The first clause continues the glowing description of Jehovah's attributes, most of the expressions being taken from the classic passage (Ex. 34: 6, 7) where the Lord proclaimed His name to Moses as one slow to anger, yet who will not at all acquit the guilty. The last clause opens one of the grandest portrayings of the majesty of Jehovah ever drawn by human pen: "Jehovah—His way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust about His feet." Across the deserts of the East a moving caravan is seen farthest by the dust they raise. So the clouds are the dust, marking the pathway of His glorious presence. II. C.

Against His own people, who repent and humble themselves before Him, He keeps not His anger forever, but against His enemies He will forever let out His anger. He will not at all acquit the wicked that sin, and stand to it, and do not repent. Those wickedly depart from their God that depart and never return, and these He will not acquit. Humble supplicants will find Him gracious, but scornful beggars will not find Him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud but late "Lord, Lord." II.

Yes, we will magnify the grace of our God; we will preach its largeness and fulness; we will repeat the angel songs of Bethlehem; we will tell of Christ lifted up to draw all men unto Him; we will rehearse His world-wide promises of forgiveness; we will point to Him in the attitude of stretching out His arms to welcome the weary and heavily laden; we will take the word which last fell from His lips, and Spirit and Bride will herald it everywhere: "Come, whosoever will." This we will do, in solemn faith that there is no number or aggravation of sins which outreach His power to save, *if* they are repented of and forsaken. But if there are any who, under Sabbath skies, and angel voices, and Gospel songs, and pleadings of mercy, and welcomings of love, and promises of help, and visions of heaven, will not repent, and will not believe—presuming, neglecting, trifling, delaying—then must we warn them that, according to the unreppealed and steadfast ordinance of retribution, the time will come—and it shall be when their need is

greatest, even when they are made to look down into the grave and the terrific mysteries which lie beyond—when they shall be so beset and depressed by the very difficulties of former habit, that the very hardest thing to be conceived of is for those to pray who never prayed before—for those to repent who never repented before; so that the mistaken man who counted on repenting in the sudden emergency of fear, and necessity, and death, discovers when too late that all his life long he has been treasuring up wrath against himself—hardening his heart, so that, though he smites upon it, the rock will yield no tenderness. W. Adams.

Can we actually bring together or hold in union any such incongruous ideas as those of a system of law and retribution, on the one hand, and the practice of *universal pardon*, dealt out to offenders by the ultimate and Supreme Power? If *all* are punished, and punished equitably, none indeed can complain; and no confusion is brought in. But if *all* are pardoned, and pardoned as a mere act of clemency, the very substance of government is made negatory. If pardon is the *rule*, punishment the *exception*, then law is blamed, or administration proved imbecile. In good and firm governments *punishment* will be the rule, and *pardon* the exception; and yet even this exceptive pardon sullies the brilliancy of power and wisdom, unless clearly it is seen to spring from some law higher or more comprehensive than the law which has been violated. I. Taylor.

6. With the terrible agencies of the volcano and the earthquake still in mind, the prophet fitly asks: "Who can stand before Jehovah's indignation?" "Who can rise up against His burning wrath?" "Rise up," and not "*abide*," is the sense of the Hebrew. His fury is poured forth like rivers of lava from the craters of Vesuvius. How, then, can the wicked endure before Him when once He ariseth in His wrath? H. C.

7. In the midst of this description of the terrible majesty of God, here is an assurance of His *goodness* to His people. He is a *stronghold* to them (cf. Prov. 18:10). He *knoweth*, in the fulness of meaning that the word bears in Scripture, *them that trust*, literally, *take shelter*, or *refuge*, in Him (cf. Ps. 2:12). *Knoweth* and *trust* are participles in Hebrew, and so express what is habitual and permanent. The *day of trouble* is the time when Nineveh invaded or oppressed Judah. B. C.

The Lord is good to those that are good, and to them He will be a stronghold in the day of trouble. The same almighty power that is ex-

erted for the terror and destruction of the wicked is engaged and shall be employed for the protection and satisfaction of His own people; He is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of public trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth, laying all waste, He will be a place of defence to those that by faith put themselves under His protection, those that trust in Him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon Him and devotedness to Him; He knows them, He owns them for His, He takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief. They are perhaps obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them. H.

8. There is a sudden transition from verse 7, where God is a refuge to His people, to verse 8, where He is a sweeping flood, overwhelming Nineveh and obliterating even its ancient foundations. The ideas, however, are kindred, for God is such a refuge to His people *because* He is such a power of destruction upon her enemies. By a fit and most palpable retribution, armies, vast and desolating, shall yet come down on Nineveh, and shall make an utter end of even the site where she stood so long in her glory. The darkness of oblivion shall chase down these enemies of God, and they shall sink from the knowledge of coming generations. H. C.

9. Nineveh's *place* should know her no more. The populous imperial city should become a perpetual desolation, according to the vivid prediction of another prophet (Zeph. 2:13, 14, 15). There should be an *utter end*. This is represented by one word in Hebrew. The same is often rendered in Jeremiah, a *full end*. Its meaning is *complete destruction*. B. C.

"Jehovah will make an utter end," In sharp contrast with God's covenant people, the great empire of Nineveh was to perish forever. Of Judah God says, "I will not make a full end" (Jer. 4:27); and so the Jew exists even to this day, though scattered over the whole earth. But the kingdom of Assyria perished almost suddenly, after having held the sovereignty of Upper Asia for more than five hundred years. Its soldiers were disciplined warriors at a time when the Medes fought in a confused mass, horse and foot, spearmen and archers all mingled in one disorderly crowd; for such, Herodotus tells us, was the Asiatic and Median mode of fighting till Cyaxares, the conqueror of Nineveh, first separated into divisions and ranks these motley hordes. Now Phraortes, the father of Cyaxares, had lost life

and empire in battle with the Assyrians, and yet in the very height of their power they fell so utterly that from the day of its capture Nineveh entirely passed away. In one day it changed from being empress of the world to absolute powerlessness. R. P. 8.

**10.** These thorns, especially that kind called *bullen*, which covers the whole country, and is that which is thus burned (*i.e.*, to clear the ground), are so folded together as to be utterly inseparable, and being united by thousands of small intertwining branches, when the torch is applied they flash and flame instantly like *stubble fully dry*. *Thomson*.

For though your armies move in phalanx, closely interlaced as thorns in their wild growth, and though they reel under their intoxication, they shall be devoured as stubble burns when perfectly dry. That they are said to be drunken as with wine, and hence to reel in their intoxication, may allude to a striking fact in God's agency over nations doomed to judgment, and also to a very striking figure to represent this fact—the fact being that God gives such nations over to infatuation; and the figure to express it being this (as appears in Jer. 25: 15–29). God sends round to the nations the wine-cup of His fury, and they drink till they are “moved” and “mad.” Hence they are easily destroyed. They more than half destroy themselves. H. C.

**11.** There is one come out of thee that imagines evil against the Lord—Sennacherib, and his spokesman, Rabshakeh; they framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah and his people, but against God Himself; reflecting upon Him as level with the gods of the heathen and unable to protect His worshippers, dissuading His people from putting confidence in Him, and urging them rather to put themselves under the protection of the great king, the king of Assyria. This one, this mighty one, so he thinks himself, that comes out of Nineveh, imagining evil against the Lord, brings upon Nineveh this burden; never was the glorious majesty of heaven and earth more daringly, more blasphemously affronted, than by Sennacherib at that time; he was a wicked counsellor, who counselled them to despair of God's protection and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavored to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation. H.

**12.** The Lord sees this heathen king deliberately plotting the destruction of Judah, and therefore declares His purpose to destroy him and his army. Though they are fully equipped,

and withal so very many, yet shall they be cut down (as the figure in verse 10 had expressed it) when He, the destroying angel, shall pass through their camp. H. C.

**13.** The prophet, addressing Judah, says: “Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.” And the affliction spoken of seems to be again alluded to shortly afterward (2: 2) in the figurative language, “the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.”<sup>a</sup> Such an affliction is that recorded in the Book of Kings and in the prophet Isaiah, when Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them, and Hezekiah gave him *thirty talents of gold, and three hundred talents of silver*, stripping the house of the Lord to meet the demand (2 K. 18: 15, 16). This was the *yoke* that Judah had felt, and Sennacherib in his second invasion threatened to make it still heavier by exacting more tribute, and transporting the people to his own land. Then it was that Isaiah was inspired to foretell the frustration of his plans, the overthrow of his army, his own retreat and tragical death (37: 7, 29). It is at least consistent with what Nabum has written, that he too was raised up at this crisis in his country's history, to be what his name signifies, a *comforter*, to console his countrymen in the hour when they seemed within the grasp of a merciless enemy, with the assurance that Jehovah would protect and save them. “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (1: 7). B. C.

**14.** His *name*, in the sense of fame, reputation, should be diffused abroad—sown *broad-cast*, no more. He should die in dishonor as a vile man, and his name go down to posterity only in disgrace. In this sense of the prophecy, its fulfilment presents no difficulty.

**15.** War telegrams were borne in those days by swift runners (see 2 Sam. 18: 19 ff.). When they brought tidings of victory and peace, their approach might well be hailed with joy. So now of these messengers with tidings of the utter ruin that befell Assyria's proud hosts in that one fatal night. The prophet's graphic touch of this scene is masterly. He gives no long and tedious details; his mind flashes over and past them all, to light on one or two most significant and expressive results. “Go, Judah, now, and keep thy solemn feasts; perform thy vows made in the hour of thy peril: this Belial shall pass through thy land no more: he is utterly cut off!” H. C.

These words are quoted by the apostle, both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the great redemption wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting Gospel (Rom. 10 : 15). Christ's ministers are those messengers of good tidings that preach peace by Jesus Christ ; how

beautiful are the feet of those messengers ! How welcome their message to those that see their misery and danger by reason of sin ! And observe, He that brings these good tidings brings with them a call to Judah to keep her solemn feasts, and perform her vows. H.

## NAHUM, CHAPTERS II., III.

**2 : 1** He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face : keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For the Lord bringeth again the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel : for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet : the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation, and the spears are shaken terribly. The chariots rage in the streets, they jostle one against another in the broad ways : the appearance of them is like torches, they run like the lightnings. He remembereth his worthies : they stumble in their march ; they make haste to the wall thereof, and the mantelet is prepared. The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved. And Huzzab is uncovered, she is carried away, and her handmaids mourn as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts. But Nineveh hath been from of old like a pool of water : yet they flee away ; Stand, stand, *they cry* ; but none looketh back. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold : for there is none end of the store, the glory of all pleasant furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste : and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and anguish is in all loins, and the faces of them all are waxed pale. Where is the den of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion *and* the lioness walked, the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid ? The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions : and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

**3 : 1** Woe to the bloody city ! it is all full of lies and rapine ; the prey departeth not. The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels ; and prancing horses, and jumping chariots ; the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear ; and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of carcases : and there is none end of the corpses ; they stumble upon their corpses. because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face ; and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a grazingstock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste : who will bemoan her ? whence shall I seek comforters for thee ? Art thou better than No-amon, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about her ; whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea ? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite ; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity : her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets : and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. Thou also shalt be drunken, thou shalt be hid ; thou also shalt seek a strong hold because of the enemy. All thy fortresses shall be *like fig trees* with the firstripe figs : if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women : the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies : the fire hath devoured thy bars. Draw thee water

for the siege, strengthen thy fortresses : go into the clay, and tread the mortar, make strong  
 15 the brickkiln. There shall the fire devour thee ; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall devour  
 thee like the cankerworm ; make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as  
 16 the locust. Then hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven : the cankerworm  
 17 spoileth, and flieth away. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy marshals as the swarms  
 of grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they  
 18 flee away, and their place is not known where they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of  
 Assyria : thy worthies are at rest : thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there  
 19 is none to gather them. There is no assuaging of thy hurt ; thy wound is grievous : all  
 that hear the bruit of thee clap the hands over thee ; for upon whom hath not thy wicked-  
 ness passed continually ?

THE whole of the prophecy of Nahum is "the burden of Nineveh," and is occupied with a most animated description of the future downfall of that great city ; and the accounts of its overthrow, which the ancient historians have left, with the recent discoveries made on the spot, afford ample evidence of the exact fulfilment of his predictions. The event was brought about by the combined revolt of the Medes and Babylonians against the luxurious tyrant who then occupied the Assyrian throne. The king gave them battle, and was for a time successful ; but eventually the allied revolters, gaining continual accessions of strength, defeated him, and he was constrained to shut himself in the city and prepare to sustain a siege, until the forces he had summoned from the remote provinces of his empire should arrive to his relief. Relying much upon an ancient oracle—that the city would never be taken until the river became its enemy—he was by no means dispirited, but prepared for the siege with a degree of courage, skill, and judicious forethought, for which he does not seem to have previously had credit. He sent away his family and treasure to the care of a distant friend on the borders of the Black Sea ; he strengthened and repaired the fortifications ; and he laid in large stores of ammunition and provisions for the use of the soldiers and inhabitants. The siege had lasted two years, and no immediate cause of alarm for the safety of the city existed, when there was an extraordinary overflow of the Tigris, which carried away no less than twenty furlongs of the great wall of the city toward the river. Seeing this, and remembering the old oracle, the king gave up for lost, and withdrew to his palace, which, like another Zimri, he set on fire, and perished in the flames with all his concubines. The army of the confederates entered precipitately by the breach thus unexpectedly presented, and completed the ruin of the city.

The agency of the river and its waters in the destruction of the city is emphatically indicated. Babylon as well as Nineveh were de-

stroyed through the agency of the rivers upon which they stood, and at first view this may suggest that the doom of the two cities is so similar that what is said of one may apply to the other. But closer consideration presents essential differences. In the case of Babylon the river was "dried up"—that is, exhausted, so as to admit the enemy ; but in the case of Nineveh the very reverse occurs—the river overflows its banks, and becomes an immediate and active agent in the city's overthrow. "With an overrunning flood shall He make an utter end of the place thereof. The gates of the river shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved. Nineveh of old is like a pool of water." Of the appropriateness of every point in this description to an inundation of the Tigris, we are ourselves but too well able to speak, having been present in the greatest city (Bagdad) now upon the same river, when it was in most part destroyed by the most extensive inundation that has been known in modern times. But fire was also to be an agent in the destruction of Nineveh. "They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." "The fire shall devour thy bars." "The fire shall devour thee." Secular history points to this agency, but not with so much distinctness and fulness of meaning as the actual ruins. It was formerly thought sufficient to point to the historical fact that the king destroyed himself by fire upon a funeral pile of his costly furniture and treasures. But the words of the prophet imply a more extensive conflagration, and the excavations lately made upon the site have distinctly confirmed this by showing that the city, or at least the public buildings, must have been fired by the conquerors after they had completed their work of slaughter and pillage. M. Botta is unable to account for the appearances which he found in the Khorsabad palace, but by supposing that the roof was of timber, and, being fired, fell into the area of the building, and continued burning a long time. During the excavations a considerable quantity of charcoal, and

even pieces of wood, either half burnt or in a perfect state of preservation, were found in many places. The lining of the chambers also bears certain marks of the action of fire. In fact, while the outside walls are untouched, the inside are calcined by intense heat. The appearances are such as could not be produced by the burning of a quantity of furniture. There must have been a violent and prolonged fire to be able to calcine not only a few places, but every part of the slabs of gypsum, which were ten feet high, and several inches thick, reducing them so thoroughly to lime that they rapidly fell to pieces on being exposed to the air. Nor were these appearances confined to this locality. Layard makes the same observations with reference to the ruins of the palace at Koyunjik. "The palace had been destroyed by fire. The alabaster slabs were almost all reduced to lime, and many of them fell to pieces as soon as uncovered." *Kitto*.

**Chap. 2.** This chapter brings us at once to the prophet's great theme—the burden of Nineveh. The mad and proud invasion of Judah by Sennacherib must first be noticed, that being the antecedent occasion of this final overthrow—the great sin of which this fall was the signal retribution. That consequently is spoken of in the first chapter. This chapter and the third give us the assault on ancient Nineveh, and her final fall.

**1.** Nineveh and her kings are addressed. Nineveh had been in her day a conquering power, dashing nations and their strong cities to atoms. Now, another great "hammer of the nations" is raised up of God, and appears at her gates, and the prophet tauntingly admonishes her to look well to her fortifications; to set watchmen along the ways leading to the city; to gird her loins for strife, and fortify to the utmost H. C.

**2.** The Lord had seemed to forsake His people for awhile, when He suffered the Assyrian to invade and ravage their land. But He was still jealous for them. He would avenge the wrongs done them. Therefore He would summon the destroyer against Nineveh. B. C.

"Because the Lord hath restored the glory of Jacob as the glory of Israel, although the 'emptiers' (her foreign enemies) had (almost) emptied the land of her population, and marred their vine branches." This language implies that Judah had suffered sorely from her enemies, both in the waste of precious life, and in the damage done her vines, and of course other vegetable growths as well. The same facts are indicated by Isaiah of this very time:

"And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward," etc. "From out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant," etc., showing that many must have perished. (See Isa. 37: 31, 32.) Verse 30 shows that cultivation had been entirely neglected during two full years. H. C.

**3.** In verses 3-7 the prophet with a few bold strokes gives a picture of the besiegers and the besieged, and the capture of the city. In this verse we see the invading army. *The shield*, small and round, *is made red*, or, as the word is rendered elsewhere, *dye'd red*. This is said to have been the color in use among the Medes, and from them, of the Persians (Xen. "Cyr." i., 3. 2, viii., 3. 1). B. C.

**3, 4.** This description, given by the prophet, of the approaching hosts of Media and Chaldea, is, like all his descriptive paragraphs, full of fire, painting to the eye most vividly. H. C.

**4.** The mention of *streets* and *broad ways* makes it probable that the scene is now transferred to the inside of the city, and that the commotion caused by the approach of the enemy is here described. The verbs may all be rendered in the present.

**5. He.** The king of Assyria, roused by imminent danger, *recounts*, or *bethinks him of his worthies*, or *nobles*, as the same word is rendered in 3: 18. But they avail him not, they are not fit for the emergency. *They stumble in their walk*, or *ways* (the word is plural in the Hebrew text), like men panic-stricken and ready to fall. The word translated *defence* makes it likely that the attack is described. What is meant seems to be a movable tower of wood, which protected the besiegers from missiles, while using the battering ram, and carried soldiers on the upper part, so as to be better able to assail with arrows the defenders of the walls. Such towers, with four or six wheels, are to be seen on Assyrian sculptures. B. C.

**6.** "The gates of her watercourses are burst open, and the palace is swept away." Nineveh stood upon the Tigris, on low ground. These "rivers" were artificial canals for letting in their supply of water for irrigation and for other uses. Now, burst open by the besiegers, the palace, and consequently much of the city, was inundated.

**8.** "Though Nineveh has been since her early days as a reservoir of waters"—a point for the confluence of people from every clime and kingdom, "yet now are they fleeing." "Stand! stand! but there is no turning them back." This translation imitates the terseness of the original. H. C.

*They flee away.* Hebrew, *and they are fleeing, or fugitives.* Her citizens are seeking safety in headlong flight. It is in vain for those who have any spirit or courage to say, *Stand!* There is no rallying. None heeds. *None looks back.*

**9.** *Take ye the spoil.* It is the command of God to the victors, for He is against Nineveh (verse 13). The latter part of the verse may also be rendered thus: *And there is no end to the store; there is glory from all vessels of desire.* *Store* represents not only the treasures of the city, but the abundance of everything that was stored up. *Glory* is used as in Gen. 31 : 1; Esther 5 : 11. There is magnificence from the accumulation of all kinds of costly and beautiful things. (Cf. Hos. 13 : 15.) B. C.

The prophet turns for a word to the conquerors, who are thought of now as within the city. "Seize the silver; seize the gold; there is no end to her stores" (*i.e.*, of carefully prepared and curiously wrought furniture, equipage, etc.)—a huge mass of all beautiful things. II. C.

**10.** *She is empty, and void, and waste.* In the Hebrew there are three substantives of similar sound and meaning, and the first two from one root—*bākah* *ūn'bākah* *ūn'bullākah*; each having an additional syllable. Something of this force may be retained by rendering, *emptying, and ransacking, and desolation.*

**11.** The prophet sees the foremost city in the world, ancient and populous, not only given up to pillage, but overthrown and razed, so that it should be a question where its site was. The lion is the emblem of majesty and strength. Here it expresses also, as the context shows, violence, bloodshed, and rapine. B. C.

**11-13.** The lion was their national symbol. This figure consequently is prominent in the ruins of ancient Nineveh (see Layard's "Nineveh," pp. 32, 47, 85, 88, etc.). Hence the prophet exultingly asks, "Where is the old den now?" In the last verse the figure is half dropped and half retained. "Burning her chariots in the smoke," drops the figure; "the sword devouring her young lions, and cutting off his prey from the earth," mostly retains it. "The voice of her messengers" is that of her ambassadors, who represented her power in distant countries, with perhaps a tacit allusion to the taunting speech of her Rabshakeh to the Jewish people on the walls of Jerusalem, as in Isa. 36 : 4-20. Such a voice as this shall be heard no more. The immediate cause of her ruin is presented forcibly: "Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts."

**Chap. 3.** The same subject—the fall of

Nineveh—is resumed and concluded. II. C. —In this chapter the prophet denounces war against Nineveh for her perfidy and violence; and strongly places before our eyes the number of her chariots and cavalry, her burnished arms, and the great and unrelenting slaughter which she spread around her (verses 1-3). He assigns her idolatries as one cause of her ignominious and unpitied fall (verses 4-7). He describes No Amun, her rival in populousness, confederacies and situation, as sharing a like fate with herself (verses 8-11); and beautifully illustrates the ease with which her strongholds should be taken (verse 12), and the feebleness of her people during the siege (verse 13). He pronounces that all her preparations, her numbers, her opulence, her multitude of chief men, would be of no avail (verses 14-17). He foretells that her tributaries would desert her (verse 18). He concludes with a triumphant exclamation, the topics of which are the greatness and incurableness of her wound, and the just triumph of others over her, on account of her extensive oppressions (verse 19). *Abp. Newcome.*

**1.** First come the moral causes of this fearful desolation. It is a city of blood; "all full of lies"—no truth between man and man; and thence come, by natural result, violence and robbery. The seizing of prey, by the strong from the weaker, never ceases. The original words suggest that men, created rational and moral, have become fierce and savage as beasts of prey.

**2, 3.** These verses resume the account of the siege and assault, continued from 2 : 3-5, 9, 10: "The crack of the whip; the noise of rattling wheels, prancing horses, bounding chariots. There are horsemen mounting; flashing swords, the lightnings of the spear; heaps of slain, masses of the dead, and no end to the corpses; men stumble over their dead bodies." Think of it, and note how it looks—this onslaught of warriors through the crowded streets of helpless Nineveh, leaving traces of their work in the heaps of her mangled dead! One of the marvels is, that the pen of prophecy should paint such a life-scene with no less vividness and force than the ablest historic pen. Surely we must see in this the impress of God's own finger!

**4.** Under this figure of a harlot, the prophet really means idolatry and its monstrous brood of superstitions, witchcrafts, and doubtless licentiousness as well. Through the influence wielded by her world-wide commerce, Nineveh had corrupted all the nations round about.

**8-10.** When Nahum wrote, Nineveh was

still in her glory. Her people felt as secure from this or any other destruction as the people of London, Paris, or New York to-day. It was to meet such a feeling of security that the prophet calls their attention to *No*, the great city known as Thebes and Diospolis, the capital of Upper Egypt, which, from a state of unrivalled splendor, wealth and greatness, had been suddenly laid in ruins. "Art thou better"—*i.e.*, stronger and more safe—"than No Amon?" "No Amon," called only "*No*," Ezek. 30 : 14-16 and Jer. 46 : 25, but more often in Egyptian history, "Thebes," stood on both sides of the Nile—a most magnificent city, the ruins of whose temples and tombs are at this day one of the wonders of the world. This city is supposed to have fallen under the assault of Sargon, king of Assyria, of whom Isa. 20 speaks.

**11.** Nineveh also, as well as Thebes, should "be drunken"—should take the wine-cup of Jehovah's wrath and drink her death-doom. (See notes on Nahum 1 : 10.) "Thou shalt be hid," means shall be lost to public view—obliterated and forgotten; dropped from the knowledge of the human race. How wonderfully has this been true of old Nineveh for twenty-five centuries! Until the present generation, ages have passed over her ruins, and no living man knew the site where once she sat so proudly and sinned so fearfully.

**14.** Tauntingly the prophet commends to her a little more labor on her fortifications—advice the more in point, because Nineveh had already expended an untold amount of wealth and labor upon this very thing, and also because she was so sure her walls were impregnable, and because they were, after all, of so very small account as against her enemies. The irony was put on for an edge, to make the truth cut. H. C.

**15.** *There*, in the very place fortified with so much care. It is as if the prophet pointed at the doomed city, and by this little word declared the certainty of her overthrow. The city is to perish with fire, her inhabitants by the sword. The ruins attest the agency of fire in their destruction. B. C.

**16.** She had enjoyed an immense commerce with India on the east, and with all western Asia and northeastern Africa on the west. The wealth of those valleys of the Euphrates

and the Tigris was also immense; but the prophet quietly suggests that the locust pillages and then flies away. So would her great wealth vanish before the hosts of her foes. H. C.

**18.** From verses 10-17 the pronouns are all feminine, because Nineveh is addressed. Here and in the following verse they are masculine, since the prophet speaks to the king of Assyria himself. B. C.

**19.** In this passage, as well as in chap. 1 : 8 and 2 : 11, 13, the prophet foretells the total and entire destruction of this city. The prophet Zephaniah likewise, in the days of Josiah, king of Judah, foretells the same sad event (chap. 2 : 13, 14, 15). But what probability was there that the capital city of a great kingdom, a city which was sixty miles in circumference, a city which contained so many thousand inhabitants, a city which had walls, according to Diodorus Siculus, a hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots could go abreast upon them, and fifteen hundred towers at proper distances in the walls of two hundred feet in height—what probability was there that such a city should ever be totally destroyed? And yet so totally was it destroyed that the place where it was situated is hardly known. The city was taken and destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians; and what probably helped to complete its ruin and devastation was the enlarging and beautifying of Babylon soon after by Nebuchadnezzar. From that time no mention is made of Nineveh by any of the sacred writers; and the most ancient of the heathen authors, who have occasion to say anything about it, speak of it as a city that was once great and flourishing, but now destroyed and desolate. *Ep. Norton.*

So the prophet leaves proud Nineveh to her righteous yet fearful doom! Considering this prophecy as written and sent forth to the world almost a century before the final catastrophe, it was a standing admonition to the king and people of Nineveh to prepare to meet God in the judgments of His wrath. Considered in its relations to God's people in the reign of Hezekiah, it was admirably adapted to secure a right moral impression from the overthrow of Sennacherib's army, and to make the people feel that, with God on their side, they need not fear the mightiest or proudest of their foes. H. C.



## PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK.

## HABAKKUK, INTRODUCTION ; CHAPTER I.

**1 : 1** THE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear ? I cry out unto thee of violence,  
3 and thou wilt not save. Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and look upon perverseness ?  
for spoiling and violence are before me : and there is strife, and contention riseth up,  
4 Therefore the law is slackened, and judgement doth never go forth : for the wicked doth com-  
5 pass about the righteous ; therefore judgement goeth forth perverted. Behold ye among  
the nations, and regard, and wonder marvellously : for I work a work in your days, which  
6 ye will not believe though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and  
hasty nation ; which march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that  
7 are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful : their judgement and their dignity proceed  
8 from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the  
evening wolves ; and their horsemen spread themselves : yea, their horsemen come from far ;  
9 they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour. They come all of them for violence ; their faces  
10 are set eagerly as the east wind ; and they gather captives as the sand. Yea, he scoffeth at  
kings, and princes are a derision unto him : he derideth every strong hold ; for he heapeth up  
11 dust, and taketh it. Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty :  
12 *even* he whose might is his god. Art not thou from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy  
One ? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained him for judgement ; and thou, O Rock,  
13 hast established him for correction. Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and  
that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacher-  
ously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous  
14 than he ; and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler  
15 over them ? He taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gath-  
16 ereth them in his drag : therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his  
net, and burneth incense unto his drag ; because by them his portion is fat, and his meat  
17 plenteous. Shall he therefore empty his net, and not spare to slay the nations continually ?

*Introduction.*

HABAKKUK was contemporary with Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah and continued down to the destruction of the city and the last deportation of captives in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, a range of some forty years. Near the middle of this period fell the first invasion by the Chaldeans in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. From Jeremiah, therefore, we may learn much respecting the general and moral condition of the people when Habakkuk wrote. One leading course of thought runs through the entire book : the sins of the covenant people ; God's raising up the Chaldeans to scourge them therefor ; the prophet's expostulation with the Lord against permitting a people so cruel and wicked as they to afflict and destroy Judah ; the Lord's answer

touching the Chaldeans ; closing with the prophet's prayer that God would re-enact the glorious scenes of deliverance that appear on so many pages of the nation's early history ; and God's virtual reply, by causing His glory to pass before the prophet's eye, thus impressing his soul with a sense of His power to save, and of His faithfulness and love as well. In view of these manifestations, the prophet exults in Jehovah alone, satisfied that under the wing and in the love of such a God he has nothing to fear, but every reason for joyful trust and triumph. In point of style Habakkuk stands unrivalled. Who can name the writer that excels him in the best qualities of a poetic imagination, and especially in his grand and sublime conceptions of Jehovah ? H. C.

In prophetic vision Habakkuk beholds the foe invade his native land, the temple and its

worship abolished, the sacred land and the free nation given over to devastation and to opprobrium. A prospect like this was well suited to plunge any sensitive heart into the most bitter grief; and when realized in all the sharpness of prophetic perception, it could not but rend asunder a heart so warm and ardent as that of Habakkuk. It was not to be expected that a soul like his should make its inspirations heard in soft and plaintive notes—it must speak in the loud sound of the trumpet. It were difficult to find words to set forth adequately the exalted claims and peculiar merits of this high minstrel of grief and joy, of desolateness and hope, of scorn and derision. In the small compass of this prophet's book may be found, as in a compendium, all the glories and excellencies of prophetic poetry. Nothing can be more magnificent and sublime than the Divine hymn which terminates his book, nothing more terrible than his threats, nothing more biting than his scorn, nothing more sweet and safe than his consolations. On Habakkuk God had bestowed in large measure all the qualities which belong to a great poet—an imagination equal to the reception and transmission of the grandest ideas; an exquisite judgment, which imparts to his figures and pictures the utmost regularity and delicacy, and the most exact proportions; and a power over language which gives so much harmony and softness, so much brilliancy and strength to all his utterances.

Habakkuk begins his poem with one animated portraiture, and closes it with another. Surely there is no poet who ever described the march of a conqueror, mighty and full of arrogance, in more vivid colors than he has done that of the Chaldeans: "That bitter and impetuous nation which traverseth the wide regions of the earth, to seize upon habitations belonging not to it," etc.; riding upon horses "swifter than leopards, and fiercer than even-  
ing wolves," etc. Who has ever uttered more derisive taunts than those in which the prophet proclaims the eventual triumph of the oppressed people over their proud tyrants, fallen from the height of their grandeur, and trodden beneath the feet of their enemies? What poet has traced with so much force and sublimity as this one, the dread solemnity of universal nature when the Lord descends upon the earth? All the ancient history of the Hebrews opens up to afford the images and pictures of his great and marvellous scenes. All that nature has of the dreadful and magnificent becomes subservient to the aim of his inspired pen. When He came in His Almightiness, "His glory covered the

heavens, and the earth was full of His praise." "Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet." At His presence "the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow." The "sun and moon stand still in their habitation," at the greater brightness of His arrows as they flew, at the gleam of His glittering spear. Yet amid all these terrors there is rest for the faithful soul. "The Lord God is my strength," and "although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Language is at best an imperfect instrument of thought—still more imperfect as the vehicle of high inspirations from heaven. And, in the case of Habakkuk, we seem to see the prophet grasping to seize words worthy to express his great conceptions, and images which may adequately represent them. Sometimes he adopts the expressions of earlier prophets, but he does not imitate them; and all that he takes becomes his own, fused up in the solid and glowing mass of his golden prophecy. *Kitto.*

An unusually clear and continuous line of thought may be discerned running through this prophecy. There are three chief divisions. We have, first, the Divine design to raise up the Chaldean empire as a scourge for men's sins (1); second, its ultimate overthrow and replacement by God's kingdom (2); third, the certainty of this happy issue in the grandeur of the Divine nature (3). These ruling ideas are worked out in the following fashion. The seer, confronted by the spectacle of violence, corruption and injustice, obdurate and incurable, demands almost passionately the Divine intervention (1:1-4). God answers by announcing speedy chastisement in the Chaldean career of conquest, rude, relentless, unmerciful, and finally sacrilegious (1:5-11). Awed and sadly the prophet accepts the necessity of the Chaldean discipline, but his sense of the repugnance between God's holy nature and the brutality of the scourge He employs convinces him instinctively that Babylonian conquest is not God's last word in the world's story, and so he asks for further light (1:12-17).

Waiting thus on Divine guidance, he receives and is ordered to record a vision of the developments of time (2:1-3). Doubt as to the issue is destroyed in the assurance that the future belongs to the righteous who possess God in

living faith, not to the godless tyranny which, unrestrained by principle, shall be driven by lust of conquest, as by love of drink, to excess that breeds its own ruin. This law of history is expanded in five woes, of which the first shows how oppression creates insurrection, the second how ill-gotten gains turn against its owner, the third enunciates the futility of all godless civilization, the fourth the demoralizing effect on tyrants of an immoral rule, and the last finds the root of the ruin in the impossibility of building up an abiding social order on aught save the knowledge and obedience of the living God (2 : 4-20). This course of thought has brought the seer to recognize in the nature of God the final solution of all problems, and has stirred his spirit to an intense realization of the Divine presence in all human affairs past, present, future. He beholds God, as in the days of old, emerging from the world unseen, marching gloriously through the earth, bending nature, nations, history to His majestic designs, righting all wrongs, overturning every oppression, annihilating the most formidable resistance, and triumphantly establishing His kingdom on earth. In the splendor of that certainty of faith the prophet can possess his soul in patience, and already, even amid the collapse of all earthly props and solaces, he will rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of his salvation (3 : 1-19).

While there is no Messianic reference in a narrow sense, in the truest and deepest sense the whole foundation of the thought of the prophecy is Messianic. The question at stake in the world's drama presented on its stage is the future of the kingdom of God upon earth, and the *dénouement* is that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2 : 14). The theological and religious value of the piece is very great. Light is thrown on the methods of prophetic revelation (2 : 1, 2) ; the ultimate laws of political and social evolution (2 : 4-20) ; the moral and religious aspect of secular affairs (1 : 12). Indeed, the book is full of large conceptions of history, fine philosophical reasoning, subtle ethical analysis, and a superb faith in God and righteousness.

Subject to the limitations of his place in human progress and the development of revelation, this prophet may claim to be the apostle of the great ultimate fact of faith, and of its sovereign part in the evolution of human destiny (2 : 4). This key-note, alike of his prophecy and of his personal experience, has been taken up and expanded in the well-known New

Testament adaptation, reached its full rights at the Reformation, and in the creeds and life of Evangelical Christendom will doubtless continue to be illustrated in ever wider issues on to the world's end. *Elmslie.*

**Chap. I.** The prophet, distressed by the appalling prevalence of wickedness among his people, cries to God for help (verses 2-4) ; the Lord replies that He is raising up the Chaldeans to scourge them, and describes that people (verses 5-11) against which the prophet expostulates with God (verses 12-17). H. C.

**1.** *The burden.* This word corresponds very nearly in use and meaning to "vision" and "word," but is used more specially of prophecies referring to heavy judgments. *Jerome*

**2-4.** The complaint of Habakkuk : a vehement remonstrance, bringing out the real character of the prophet, and giving a lively portraiture of the prevalent corruption of the people. The prophet feels his earnestness to God, and his expostulations give expression to that indignation at the triumph of wrong which is inseparable from the love of right. They involve a certain conviction that righteousness must have the upper hand when God manifests Himself. B. C.

The prophet speaks of the state of society in Judah before the Chaldeans were thought of. Verse 2 seems to imply that the prophet had been for some time in his prophetic work, laboring among a degenerate people, battling against sin, and almost impatient that the Lord did not interpose to convert, or chastise, or exterminate. Jer. 22 shows that the people were then horribly corrupt, and that their king, Jehoiakim, was the weakest, meanest, and wickedest king that had ever disgraced their throne. Verse 3 is literally rendered thus : "Why dost Thou cause me to behold iniquity, and why dost Thou look (unconcerned) upon human misery ? Destruction and violence are before me ; there is strife, and men excite contention." The second clause does not well admit the sense : Why dost Thou *make me behold* ? The implied expostulation with God is stronger—Why dost Thou Thyself look on this woe with no effort to relieve or prevent ? H. C.

**4.** The culminating point in Habakkuk's complaint is the triumph of injustice in the guise of law. So long as the tribunal of justice stands firm, the national character is not fatally affected by the acts of evil-doers ; but when it sides with the oppressor, all hope of reformation from within is lost, and judgment must come from without. This statement applies to the time of Jehoiakim. B. C.

**5-11.** Jehovah Himself replies by predicting a judgment so much more terrible and wide in its sweep than any the prophet had expected as to redouble his amazement. As the prophet had spoken for the whole company of the righteous in Israel as well as for himself, so God addresses His reply to them as well as to him. He bids them look round among the nations with which they were at peace. Do they see no cloud on the horizon, no sign, no portent of danger? He is about to work a work of judgment so marvellous as to seem incredible to them. They will not believe it, though it be told them. He is about to rouse the *Chasidim* against them. *Cor.*

The whole tone of this passage implies that, when the prophecy was given, the Chaldeans had begun, and even carried on for some time, the course of rapid conquest; but that as yet the Jews had no apprehension that they would be attacked. They would not believe this when it was announced to them. So Jeremiah complains. B. C.

**6.** This is the work, the raising up of a new first-class power, the Chaldeans. By taking notice of recent events, the Jews might see the rise of this power. The Chaldean king Nabopolassar, aided by the Medes, had overthrown Nineveh (B.C. 625), as Nahum had foretold. The Egyptians, alarmed at their growth, came against them, but were badly beaten at Carchemish, on the Euphrates. Thenceforward no nation was able to stay their progress. The Jews, moreover, were probably the less alarmed at this because they were in sympathy with the Chaldean, while he was devastating Nineveh, and were certainly in league with him when Josiah felt bound in honor to march out against Necho, king of Egypt, as a common enemy to himself and to his ally, the Chaldean. But relations of friendship with such a power are evanescent. The Jews soon had reason to fear this new enemy, "bitter and rapid," "who march upon broad regions," vast countries of the earth—i.e., who fear nothing, and strike for vast conquests.

**7, 8.** Sad proof that they were "terrible and dreadful" appears in the history (2 Chron. 36: 17): "He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age." H. C.

**10.** *They shall scoff at the kings.* The ignominious treatment of conquered princes is frequently referred to as characteristic of the Babylonian conquerors; it is specially declared

by Ezekiel to be the punishment reserved for the evil-doers, the princes of Judah—see on chap. 22: 4-6—"those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee."

**11.** The description of the Chaldeans thus closes with a distinct intimation of the cause of their final destruction; the principle of ungodliness developed by a series of aggressions, finding its full expression in self-worship, can have but one issue—ruin never long delayed. This result, however, is not yet declared; the prophet has to work it out in his own mind, and so be prepared for the final announcement. B. C.

**12-17.** Here the prophet interposes. The remainder of this chapter must be expounded as his expostulation or debate with God, the spirit of which is: "O Lord, spare Thy heritage, and give it not over to utter devastation. Thy people doubtless need correction, and Thou hast ordained the Chaldean power for this purpose; but do not let them ruin our nation utterly and forever." H. C.

**12.** Thou art from everlasting, and then we shall not die. The Israel of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, though it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles, chastened, and not killed; chastened sore, but not delivered over to death. The prophet infers the perpetuity of the Church from the eternity of God; for Christ has said, "Because I live, and therefore, as long as I live, ye shall live also" (John 14: 19). He is the Rock on which the Church is so firmly built that the gates of hell shall not, cannot, prevail against it. We shall not die. H.

**13.** The expression of trust is followed by an earnest expostulation; how can the purity and holiness of God be reconciled with the toleration of greater evil in the agent of wrath, than that which He had punished in His people? B. C.—The sense I take to be, "Thou canst not look calmly and unconcerned upon iniquity, or rather, upon *misery*—the woe that sin begets; it is not in Thy nature. Wherefore, then, dost Thou look quietly on the perfidious—those faithless Chaldeans—and wherefore art Thou silent," etc. H. C.

**16.** The man who is continually coveting what God has denied him does not trust God; he does not believe God to be his chief good. He looks upon money, or worldly goods in some shape or other, to be more to be desired than God, and therefore "he sacrifices unto his net, and burns incense unto his drag." He sets up a golden idol in his heart and worships it, and therefore the apostle warns us that "covet-

ousness is idolatry." For this cause also our Saviour declares that those who serve Mammon cannot serve God. *Tutor.*

17. Will God allow them to go on, empty-

ing and then filling their nets, and having no compassion in their souls toward sparing the nations from perpetual slaughter? Such is the prophet's plea in behalf of his people. H. C.

## HABAKKUK, CHAPTER II.

- 2:1 I WILL stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Yea, moreover, wine is a treacherous dealer, a haughty man, and that keepeth not at home: who enlargeth his desire as hell, and he is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.
- 9 Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.
- 12, 13 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.
- 15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that addeth thy venom *thereto*, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and be as one uncircumcised: the cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory. For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover thee, and the destruction of the beasts, which made them afraid; because of men's blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all that dwell therein.
- 18 What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and the teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise! Shall this teach? Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

**Chap. 2.** In this chapter the prophet is seen on his watch-tower, waiting for an answer from the Lord to his expostulations (verse 1). The remainder of the chapter contains this answer in its various parts, directing the prophet first to write out the vision plainly (verse 2); assuring him it was soon to be fulfilled (verse 3); indicating how the proud and unbelieving would abuse it, but the believing be blessed thereby (verse 4); and then (verses 5-20) de-

picting the sins of the Chaldeans, and showing that both general justice and the special agencies of God's providence would surely overtake them with fearful retribution. H. C.

To the expostulation, which closes the former chapter, the prophet tells us here in the second that he waited most attentively for the answer of God, and received it with a command to write it upon tables so plain "that he may run that readeth it," or may easily run it over with-

out hesitation, it being so legible. And the substance of the Divine answer is this: That the Chaldeans were indeed such men as the prophet had represented them; and that therefore, when God had used them as rods for the chastisement of His people, He would throw them into the fire and utterly consume them. This burden of the Babylonians begins at the fifth verse. The low and shameful condition into which the king of Babylon should sink is described in the following verses by the remarks which his conquered and captive nations should make upon him, "taking up a taunting proverb against him, and saying, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!" etc.

*Reading.*

In this second chapter he turns from Judah to Babylon, and predicts the doom that will fall on the Chaldeans when they shall have discharged the solemn duty for which God has raised them up, and shows us how they, "the rod of Jehovah," will be broken and cast into the fire so soon as the moment of correction has passed. As we study it, we are profoundly impressed with one of those large convictions which widen and elevate and comfort our striving thoughts: for it sets the Maker of heaven and earth before us as using men and the races of men for ends of mercy they wot not of, as giving a dramatic unity to the whole human story, and conducting it to a happy close, in which "all the earth" will be gathered into "His holy temple." *Cox.*

1. Considered as a seer, the prophet must needs look two ways: first, to God, for His message; and then down into the future, and abroad into the realms of Divine providence, to see those coming events which no human vision, unaided, could reach. This verse strikingly presents the prophet looking the first way—*toward God*. He says: "I will take my stand on my watch-tower, and place myself on the fortress, and will watch to see what God will say to me." The prophet, having said what is recorded (chap. 1: 12-17), should of course watch to see how the Lord received it, and what He would say in reply. He acted for the people of Judah, representing their case before God, and could not but feel deeply solicitous to get the answer. *H. C.*

God certainly hears what we speak, but we many times do not hear what He speaks, though He speaks peace to us. God always hears the prayer of faith and answers it, but we do not always hear what the answer is. *Caryl*.—Consider what we may gain by communion with good and holy men, and then conclude from

this less to the greater. Consider the elevating, ennobling influences which it exercises on the character to live in habitual intercourse with the excellent of the earth, with those whose conversation is in heaven, the tones of whose minds are high and lofty and pure. Almost without being aware of it, we derive some of their spirit into ourselves; it is like an atmosphere of health which we unconsciously inhale. But how much more must this be the case, how far mightier the reactive influence for good, when we continually set before us, when we live in fellowship with Him, who is the highest, the purest, and the best, in whom all perfections meet, from whom all true nobleness proceeds; when thus, I say, our fellowship is not with men, who have caught a few glimpses of the glory of God, but with God Himself, from whom all greatness and glory proceed? *Trench.*

2. Here the answer begins. "Write the vision"—all I reveal—"engrave it on tablets, so that the reader of it may run"—*i.e.*, with it, reading from it as he runs.

3. There seems to be no absolute demand for restricting the vision here spoken of to any particular part of what God revealed to Habakkuk. Of the whole, the main events yet future were: 1. The Chaldean invasion of Judah (recorded 1: 5-11). 2. The ultimate destruction of the Chaldean power and of Babylon in righteous retribution for their sins (2: 5-20). Both parts were fixed in the Divine counsels, each had its definite time to wait, yet neither would tarry long. The former came probably within a few months; the latter at the end of about seventy years, Cyrus being the instrument of Jehovah's vengeance in its execution. "Though it linger, yet wait for it, for it will surely come; it will not be *behind the time*"—*i.e.*, will not be too late, so as to *come in afterward*. This is the exact sense of the second verb. *H. C.*

The word of God will be accomplished. That word, or vision, "pants" toward its appointed end, hastens toward its goal; it is a living creative word, and carries in itself an impulse to fulfil itself. It cannot lie or fail. It will not deceive those who trust in it; though it tarry and seem to linger, it will not stop short of the goal; it only waits its due moment, and will surely arrive. *Cox*.—The day that God has set for the deliverance of His people and the destruction of His and their enemies is a day that will surely come at last: it is never adjourned without fixing another day, but it will without fail come at the fixed time and the

fittest time. It will not tarry, for God is not slack, as some count slackness, though it tarry past our time, yet it does not tarry past God's time, which is always the best time. II.

Two brief expressions here present us with God's way of dealing toward men throughout all time. "The Lord tarrieth"—there is the one; "The Lord cometh"—there is the other. He tarries when He lets His people walk in darkness; and He comes when He makes plain, before the face of heaven and earth, that He can do beyond what we may ask or think. He tarries, frequently far longer than we in short-sightedness thought good, or in rash haste deemed possible; He comes, and in a manner much more manifest, and wonderful, and glorious, than our weak faith had ever thought or asked. He tarries, just that He may come; and when He comes, then it appears that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." *Ven O.*

4. In the invasion by the terrible Chaldeans, just coming upon the people as announced above (1: 5-10), and the retribution to come at some future day on them—a thing of faith, forming the chief burden of chap. 2—some would be intensely agitated, having practically no faith in God's promises, or in His threatened retributive judgments on the wicked Chaldean. Others would repose calmly upon God through their faith. These two classes are before us in this verse. I paraphrase it thus: "Behold the proud, disquieted man. His soul within him is not placid; but as for the righteous man, he shall live by his faith." The verb "*live*" must be taken in its very common moral sense of true blessings—the calm repose of a true faith in God. The Hebrew accents connect very closely the words rendered "*the just*" and "*by his faith*," showing that the earlier Jews read the clause, "He who is all right in respect to his faith shall live." This construction also makes a natural antithesis between the proud man of the first clause and the sincerely believing man of the second. The former is never placid; the latter enjoys in the rest of faith that true *life* which is real blessedness. II. C.

The vision itself must wait a verse or two; but, meantime, the prophet announces its main theme. Its theme is, substantially, the contrast between the man who is puffed up with self-trust and the man who holds fast his trust in God. He that is puffed up with vain self-confidence shall know no tranquillity of heart, while the man who confides in God and cleaves to Him shall *live* by his faith. This, in general, is the theme and substance of that

"vision" in which the prophet's doubts were answered by the words that came to him when, perplexed by the apparent injustice of Providence, he made a silence in his heart, and listened to hear what Jehovah would say in him. *Cor.*

*The just shall live by his faith.* This text, most important as supplying the keynote to Paul's doctrinal teaching, has a distinct meaning specially applicable to the prophecy. The complaint was that the righteous man is devoured by the wicked without any intervention on the part of God (1: 13); the answer is that the wicked man is puffed up, and unrighteous, an object therefore of abhorrence to God, who "hateth" the proud and overthrows the unrighteous; but that the righteous man will live, be preserved from the destruction which Habakkuk anticipated, on one condition, that he retain his trust in God. The word rendered "faith" has the fundamental sense of steadfastness, hence trustworthiness, faithfulness in the discharge of all duties, specially of promises; as a personal quality, truth in deed and word, and in man's relation to God firm belief and reliance on the Divine promise, the special sense in this passage; whatever may betide others who "will not believe" (chap. 1: 5), the righteous who believes and trusts will live. That the word is properly rendered "faith," taken in the true, full sense of trustful faith, is clear from the usage of the verb in the palmary text, "and he believed" (Heb. *hacamin*; the word here is *amanah*, from the same root) "in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15: 6). That such reliance or faith is meant in our passage is evident; it is demanded in the preceding clause, "wait for it." B. C.

Abraham's faith was no intellectual assent to a demonstrated proposition; it was the trust of the heart in the voice of God. It was the belief, not that solves difficulties, but that rises above them. Why was Abraham's faith counted to him for righteousness? Because, as all sin lies folded in one thought of distrust, so in one thought of trust lies all possible righteousness—its patience, its hope, its heroism, its endurance, its saintliness; and therefore He who sees the end from the beginning reckons it as righteousness. In the faith of Abraham lay all the righteous endurance, all the active service, of his believing life. This simple trust of Abraham made the practical motive power of his life, as it should make that of ours. *Bp. Magee.*

No better index to the character of the Old Testament covenant can be found than the

lives and workings of those who lived under it, and who were pointed out by Divine revelation as its best representatives and exponents. And just these, the prophets, both the literary and those of action, as also the psalmists, and all the men of God, nowhere claim that they are the children of God because they have been obedient to the commands of the Lord, because they have complied with the iota of Moses' code. With one accord they attribute their acceptable standing in God's sight solely and alone to God's undeserved mercy; they are His children, because He has received them and pardoned their sins. Not self-righteousness, but the mercy of God, is the burden of their prayer and prophecy. A covenant and religious life that can produce such confidence in Divine mercy cannot be based upon the basis of legal obedience. And what this Old Testament faith and life implies is plainly also its teaching. Nowhere in its pages do we find one word that can be construed or misunderstood into the doctrine that righteousness by the law is the principle of the Old Testament covenant. As little as the Old Testament saints claimed such a righteousness for themselves, so little did they teach it as a doctrine. They ascribe all the glory to God, and not to themselves. It is only on this basis that the contents of Old Testament revelation are historically intelligible. In the old covenant, then, as in the new, the doctrine of justification by faith alone prevails; in the one, the object of this faith is still a promise, whose advent is anxiously waited; in the other, the object of this faith is a historical reality, and has arrived; the historical mission of the law has been fulfilled. There is thus between the two Testaments not a difference of kind, but merely of degree; both portray the development of the kingdom of God on earth, the one in its preparatory stage, the other in its completed stage. *Schodde.*

In the Hebrew religion the ground of man's acceptance with God was neither sacrifice nor ceremonial observance, though these were required, but faith—a trust in God, bringing the whole heart and life into dependence upon Him and harmony with His will. This is set forth in the story of the heroes of old, and especially in that of the father of Israel. It is earnestly insisted upon by the prophets through a course of several centuries; it appears abundantly in the Psalms and in the story of Job. Everywhere, from the oldest patriarchal story to the latest utterance of the sacred volume, there is one and the same teaching; "his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just

shall live by his faith"—by his calm trust in God.

The Gospel teaches that this is the essential principle of all true religion; but how did Israel know it? How were those rude ages and those rough men of action able to grasp that principle which, even in our times, it has ever proved so difficult to keep alive in the hearts of men? It seems almost an insult to the understanding to ask whether it could have been a merely human development. *Gardiner.*

The just shall live by his faith, by that faith which he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38), for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only, and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made just by faith shall live, shall be happy here and forever; while they are here, they live by it—when they come to heaven faith shall be swallowed up in vision. H.

Paul claims him as teaching substantially the same doctrine as he was laying down. There has never been but one way to God, and that has always been the way of faith. The law required righteousness, that conscience might be quickened to a sense of unrighteousness; and the saints of old drew their righteousness from the same source as had been laid bare to our eyes by the Gospel. Life and righteousness always have come through faith. Of old, the faith had a veiled promise to clasp; to day, it has an unveiled Christ. The firmness of the grasp should correspond with the clearness of the revelation. A. M.

*The just shall live by his faith.* A Christian's life is a life of faith, according to this saying of the prophet, which is thrice quoted by the apostle, with reference to the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. As it is by faith that the just shall come to heaven, and live there, so it is by faith that they live here upon earth too. And it is their living faith upon earth whereby they come to live in heaven. There they live by sight and not by faith; but that we shall never do, except we first live by faith and not by sight. *Bp. Beveridge.*

The faith which gives our only hope of justification is not a quiescent frame of belief and expectation; it is an active principle, a working power; only it works, not by the constraining force of law, but by the energizing force of love. This is the fulfilling of the law; love sums it up in one sentence, simple, comprehensive, complete. The fruit of this spiritual obedience is seen in all that makes society en-



durable, makes home blessed, makes life beautiful—in all that gives hope to the world through the coming in of the kingdom of God. J. P. T.

Assent to the truth of the Word is but an act of the understanding, which reprobates and devils may exercise. But justifying faith is a compounded habit, and hath its seat both in the understanding and will; and, therefore, called a "believing with the heart" (Rom. 10: 10), yea, a "believing with all the heart" (Acts 8: 37). It takes in all the powers of the soul. There is a double object in the promise; one proper to the understanding, to move that; another to the will, to excite and work upon that. As the promise is true, so it calls for an act of assent from the understanding; and as it is good as well as true, so it calls for an act of the will to embrace and receive it. Therefore he which only notionally knows the promise and speculatively assents to the truth of it, without clinging to it and embracing of it, doth not believe savingly, and can have no more benefit from the promise than nourishment from the food he sees and acknowledgeth to be wholesome, but eats none of it. *Gurnall*.

"God's righteousness by faith" hangs together and receives one consistent sense. It is at every point the clean contrary to "Man's righteousness by works;" and accordingly the apostle's efforts through nearly three chapters (Rom. 3-5) are directed to abolish the latter, that he may establish the former and shut us up to accept it. If it can be shown that by the deeds of the law can no man be justified before God, then it will follow that any justifying righteousness available for us must be a righteousness not ours, but God's; which comes to our account—not on our doing it, but on our trusting to it as our Saviour's deed. And it is just such a righteousness which in the Gospel is revealed unto us. *Dykes*.

The justification of sinners is directly connected with Christ as a propitiation, and described, in every variety of expression, as having been effectually procured by and founded upon that propitiation. It is connected (1) with the death of Christ (Rom. 5: 10); (2) with the blood of Christ (Eph. 1: 7; Rom. 5: 9); (3) with the obedience of Christ (Rom. 5: 19); (4) with the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5: 21); (5) with the name of Christ (1 Cor. 6: 11; Acts 10: 43); (6) with the knowledge of Christ (Isa. 53: 11; John 17: 3, 4). In short, in every part of Scripture this connection is seen, and Christ's people are so absolutely dependent on what He did and suffered for their pardon and ac-

ceptance that He is said to be their life, their peace, their righteousness, their hope, their joy, as if "all their springs were in Him," and "Christ were all in all." *J. Buchanan*.

Faith in Christ is not only faith in His having died for us; it is faith in Him as our Saviour now also by His life; it is the throwing ourselves upon Him in all things, as our Redeemer, as our Saviour, as our Head of whom we are members, deriving our life only from Him.

And thus it is true that our faith in Christ alone justifies; our faith in His death once, in His life evermore; our faith in Him as redemption, and as sanctification; our faith in Him as everything, in ourselves as nothing; our faith in Him leading to union with Him, that so being His members truly we shall be with Him and in Him evermore. *T. Arnold*.

The reckoning of righteousness to the unrighteous, on condition of their faith, is not because of any merit in faith. It does not come about in reward of, but by means of, their faith, which is nothing in itself, but is the channel only of the blessing. Nor is it a mere arbitrary act of God's, or an unreal imputing of what is not. But faith unites with Christ; and "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," so as that "in him we have redemption." His righteousness becomes ours. Faith grafts us into the living Vine, and we are no longer regarded in our poor sinful individual personality, but as members of Christ. Faith builds us into the rock; but He is a living stone, and we are living stones, and the life of the foundation rises up through all the courses of the great temple. Faith unites sinful men to God in Christ; therefore it makes them partakers of the "blessedness of the man, . . . to whom the Lord will not impute sin," and of the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord reckons His faith for righteousness. That same faith which thus clothes us with the white robe of Christ's righteousness, in lieu of our own tattered raiment, also is the condition of our becoming righteous by the actual working out in our character of all things lovely and of good report. It opens the heart to the entrance of that Divine Christ who is made first for us, and then, by daily appropriation of the law of the spirit of life, is made in us "righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." *A. M.*

*The Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world.* Human theories, like a mist before the sun, may obstruct and becloud the light of this great fact; but received as a fact, with humble faith, it inspires gratitude, diffuses peace, and

imparts strong consolation. Here is a reason out of ourselves—higher, stronger than ourselves—which is as an anchor to the soul. Condemned by the written law, condemned by his own conscience, man places his hand on the cross of Christ and repeats the great words of his faith: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." The pillars of heaven may tremble, but he who trusts in God's mode of justifying the guilty shall never be afraid. *II. Idioms.*

5. At this point the strain of discourse turns to the Chaldean power, considered as a unit, and continues to speak of him through the chapter. Starting with the thought in the first clause of verse 4—the case of the proud, unbelieving, and therefore disquieted Jew—the prophet proceeds to say: "How much more of this one (the Chaldean) because he errs the more by reason of wine, is a proud man, and never rests quietly at home; who enlarges his desire as Sheol (*i.e.*, the grave) does its mouth, and he is like death and is never satisfied; and consequently he gathers unto him all the nations and annexes to himself all the peoples." This represents the ambition of a young conquering power, grasping the dominion of the world, and, like Alexander, pained to tears when he finds no other world to conquer. Such is the Chaldean. The reader will note, here and onward through the chapter, how the Lord does in fact answer the expostulations of His prophet, recorded 1:12-17. The prophet had virtually said: "O Lord, Thou art ever righteous and just; Thou canst not look quietly on wrong and its resulting miseries; how, then, canst Thou see the Chaldean exterminate another nation more righteous than he? How canst Thou let him go on unpunished, sweeping the nations into his drag net, and slaughtering myriads of men to satiate his mad ambition?" The Lord replies: Be at rest; the Chaldean is indeed guilty, he shall have his just doom not far hence. There shall never be just occasion to say or to think that I can look down upon wrong-doing and its consequent misery with indifference, or that justice has forsaken My throne. This is what the prophet brings back from God concerning his expostulation (2:1). *II. C.*

*First Woe, to end of Verse 8.*

6. The acquisitions of the Chaldeans, whether

annexed territories or spoils amassed by rapine, are represented as so many pledges extorted from the conquered and reclaimable by them; the greater the amount the heavier the debt and the retribution.

7. The word *suddenly* points to the rise of the Medo-Persian power, the exactors of the debt; a rise not less sudden, rapid and unexpected than that of the Chaldeans.

8. The agents in the overthrow of the Babylonian empire were Media, Persia, with confederate tribes, all of whom had been attacked and spoiled by Nebuchadnezzar, but existed as a powerful remnant ready when "awakened" to exact revenge. *B. C.*

#### 9-11. *Second Woe.*

Here is a woe against him for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher. The crime for which this woe is denounced is much the same with that in the foregoing article—an insatiable desire of wealth and honor; it is coveting an evil covetousness to his house, grasping at an abundance for his family. Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family; it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it; he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house; and, which is worse, it brings the curse of God upon it and upon all the affairs of it. Woe to him that gains an evil gain; so the margin reads it. There is a lawful gain which by the blessing of God may be a comfort to a house (a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children); but what is got by fraud and injustice is ill got and will be bad again, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. *II.*

9. The Chaldeans employed the wealth and the muscle of the nations they subdued, in building their immense walls, towers and castles, hoping thereby to make their city impregnable, and thus deliver themselves from the fear of future harm from foreign enemies. They did indeed set their nests on high, as the eagle in the lofty crags of the rock. *II. C.*

10. *Thou hast sinned against thy own soul.* Committing a sin which will be visited on thyself, bringing with it immediate guilt, and a certainty of future punishment. The buildings, like those of Egypt under Rameses II., were the work of innumerable captives carried off ruthlessly in wars of aggression.

11. Each part of the building, bearing witness to the crimes of the founder, will cry out for vengeance; thus echoing the prophet's outcry (chap. 1:2). The figure, not uncommon in classic writers, is adopted, though with a

modified application, by our Lord (Luke 19 : 40) ; it has a peculiar fitness in reference to a building founded on bloodshed and compacted by fraud (see verse 12). Blood shed by violence cries out for vengeance (Gen. 4 : 10). B. C.

The boldness and beauty of this figure of the stones and beams of a house built with godless gains crying shame on its inmate, appealing and responding to each other in a common prediction of woe, need no words to set them forth, but may be safely left to make their own impression on our minds. But they take an added force when we remember that the marshy plains of Chaldea produce neither timber nor stone. Every block of marble, therefore, and every beam of costly timber, such as they lavished on palace and temple, were drawn from a foreign land—often drawn by robbery and violence—and would be the more likely to protest against the base and alien uses to which they were devoted. *Cor.*

**Thy soul.** The offspring of God, and bearing on it the image of the Father, the soul is great. Its attributes, incomparably higher than any which reside in matter, make it great. Its vast capacities, also, and, most of all, its immortal destiny, make it great. In the teaching of Christ the soul *is* the man, and determines his position in the scale of existence ; not the body, not outward possessions, not social rank, not anything connected only with the present world ; but the spiritual nature, its powers, principles and moral condition. The soul *is* the man ; in it are all his *real* distinctions, all his worth, his dignity and his happiness ; there lies his character in the universe, there his *whole being* for good or for evil—there and nowhere else. The Gospels have filled the world with a most blessed sound ; *there is a soul in man, and the soul is, beyond expression, great and precious.* J. Young.

#### Third Woe, Verses 12-14.

The prophet sees the city in process of extension, hands of captives, Jews and Gentiles, bleeding and dying under the blows of their drivers, and he realizes the fraudulent dealings by which the treasures expended in the erection of enormous fortifications had been amassed. B. C.

There never were such great builders as the despots of Babylon ; the land which they covered or enclosed with their vast erections is to be reckoned by hundreds of square miles ; and hence the Chaldean is denounced under the figure of a builder. The great cities of Chaldea

built or rebuilt under its victorious despots, with their walls, temples, hanging gardens, canals, etc., were erected with the treasures and by the forced labor of conquered races. They were therefore " built with blood " and " founded on injustice." Whole tribes were " expended " and exhausted upon them. But while the Chaldean thought to establish his empire by erecting impregnable cities, God saw and ordained that these cities should be burned and destroyed. The nations and races compelled to labor on them were therefore " wearying themselves *for the fire*," and " exhausting themselves *for vanity*," since the fire would consume the stately products of their labor and bring them to nought. But why—why must this be ? Why were cities so vast and stately, why was a kingdom so vast and populous, and rich, ordained to destruction ? Had God in judgment forgotten His mercy ? No ; the judgment was the sign and manifestation of His mercy. For, in His mercy, He designed that " the whole earth should be filled with the knowledge of His glory "—*i.e.*, should be quickened into life eternal ; and how could His kingdom come till the great kingdom founded in injustice and blood was brought to an end ? So we have this wonderful picture or panorama suggested. The mighty Chaldean condemns the races he has robbed and captured to build great cities which are to be the defence and glory of his kingdom. The transported captives, torn from home and fatherland, exhaust themselves in toil. He who sitteth in the heavens sees that, so far from establishing the Chaldean power, they are wearying themselves for the fire by which He will cause the cities and the power which erected them to be consumed. Nay, more ; his design in condemning that power to overthrow is not a mere destructive indignation, but a reconstructing, reconciling, all-embracing compassion. On the ruins of the power which exalts itself against Him, He intends to found " the kingdom that cannot be moved," in which justice shall reign, and holiness, and charity. *Cor.*

**14.** The general scope of the context must determine the specific sense of this passage. This shows that the prophet thinks of God as glorifying Himself by the retributions of justice on nations guilty of great oppression and wrong. Hence our verse assumes it to be a great principle in the government of God over nations as such that He will not only glorify Himself by the retributions of justice upon them, but will fill the whole earth with the knowledge of this glory, even as the waters

cover the bed of the sea. He will manifest Himself so abundantly as the avenger of the oppressed, and as one who takes vengeance on oppressors, that no man in all the earth can fail to know it—none be too blind to see it. The same sentiment is in Num. 14:21—referring there, however, to retribution on the unbelieving Hebrews who gave credit to the unbelieving spies more than to the God of all the promises: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"—which was revealed then in forty years of wandering in the desert, through privations and plagues which swept to their early graves the last man of that unbelieving host. The very analogous promise (Isa. 11:9) looks toward the visitations of mercy and the triumphs of love: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" and this knowledge shall mould human hearts into the spirit of heavenly love and blessed peace. So it is clearly in God's plan to manifest His glory in both ways—in the retributions of justice and in the visitations of mercy. H. C.

*Fourth Woe, Verses 15-17.*

**15.** *Giveth his neighbor drink.* The expression is figurative, but suggested by the habits of the Babylonians (see verse 5). B. C.—Just as a man might give a neighbor, against whom he had a grudge, strong drink in order to put him to shame, so the Chaldean had disguised his wrath, and enticed nations by blandishments and promises of friendship and protection into alliances which were turned to their shame and ruin. The Chaldean was a shameless league-breaker, winning his neighbors with smooth words to thoughts and hopes of peace, and then taking them at unawares and falling on them when they were disarmed. God will requite him, giving him to drink the cup with which he had intoxicated others, striking him down by the artifices of foes who come upon him when he is not aware. This seems to be the meaning, enigmatically or figuratively expressed, of verses 15 and 16. *Cor.*

Much in point here are the facts of her history when, on the very night of her final fall, Belshazzar and his lords drank wine from the sacred vessels of Jehovah's temple, and in the height of their drunken revelry the thunderbolts of ruin fell! (Dan. 5:1-4, 30; Jer. 51:39.) H. C.

*Fourth woe, verses 15, 16. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink.* Grotius justly ob-

serves that these two verses contain an allegory. The Chaldeans gave to the neighboring nations the cup of idolatry and of deceitful alliance; and in return they received from Jehovah the cup of His fury. *Abp. Newcome.*

Some there be that place their happiness in the bottle, in rioting and drunkenness, excess and intemperance; saying with the epicure, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Intemperance indeed is commonly a social vice; carries some show and appearance of a virtue, seems not, like one of the foregoing sins, pride, envy, covetousness and oppression, to seek its own only, but also the things of others; it delights in conversation and good company; pretends to benevolence and love of its neighbor; appears intent upon promoting that joy and pleasure, that cheerfulness and good humor, which is thought the best cordial of life, and the most sovereign remedy of its sorrows and cares. But alas! what is this heaven of the epicure, this *summum bonum* and chief felicity, which the sensualist fancies to be nowhere else but in his cups and good cheer? What is it (if we believe this oracle of truth) but a false good, a true evil, a delusive bliss, a real woe? "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink;" if it be a happiness, it is not the happiness of a man, but of a brute. As the root it springs from is only the animal life, and the mere appetite of taste its gratifications, if it aim no higher it must needs be unworthy the dignity of a rational being; and all its pleasures base, brutal, inglorious. "Thou art filled with shame for glory." The more of this happiness the drunkard enjoys, the more is his misery, the greater is his woe; to be filled with liquor is to be filled with "shame;" and he that drinks till he can hold no more has one cup more to pledge, which he little thinks of; the "cup" of Divine vengeance, for abusing himself and his neighbor with such brutish excess. Hear this, all ye that love to indulge in yourselves or to promote in others the pleasure of this bestial vice; and remember the just sentence of Divine wrath here pronounced against it, which will certainly take hold of you even in this life, if not prevented by a timely repentance. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and maketh him drunken also." *Wogan.*

**20.** All unlike the whole idol system are the power, the majesty, and the all-pervading reign of the dread Jehovah! That He should be thought of by a Jew as in His holy temple at Jerusalem was both natural and truthful; for His manifested presence was there in the Holy

of Holies, reposing above the mercy-seat and beneath the wings of the cherubim. All the idol temples were godless. Not so the temple of the Lord of Hosts in Mount Zion ! His rule is both supreme and universal. Let all the earth stand in awe before Him—all the more so, as they note how the proud and conquering nations of the earth, like old Babylon, meet

their righteous doom from the retributive justice of His throne ! II. C.

*This is the "vision which the prophet Habakkuk did see" from his watch-tower ; this was what God said within him in answer to his complaint of the inequalities of Divine providence ; and thus he was led from the darkness of doubt to the light and life of faith. Cor.*

## HABAKKUK, CHAPTER III.

**3 : 1** A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet, to Shigionoth.

2 O LORD, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid :

O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,

In the midst of the years make it known ; In wrath remember mercy.

3 God came from Teman, And the Holy One from mount Paran,

[Selah

His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of his praise.

4 And *his* brightness was as the light ; He had rays *coming forth* from his hand ; And there was the hiding of his power.

5 Before him went the pestilence, And fiery bolts went forth at his feet.

6 He stood, and measured the earth ; He beheld, and drove asunder the nations : And the eternal mountains were scattered, The everlasting hills did bow ; His goings were *as of old*.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction : The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers ? Was thine anger against the rivers, Or thy wrath against the sea, That thou didst ride upon thine horses, Upon thy chariots of salvation ?

9 Thy bow was made quite bare ; The oaths to the tribes were a *sure word*.

[Selah

Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw thee, and were afraid ; The tempest of waters passed by : The deep uttered his voice, And lifted up his hands on high.

11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation ;

At the light of thine arrows as they went, At the shining of thy glittering spear.

12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation,

Thou didst thresh the nations in anger.

13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people,

For the salvation of thine anointed ;

Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked,

Laying bare the foundation even unto the neck. [Selah

14 Thou didst pierce with his own staves the head of his warriors :

They came as a whirlwind to scatter me :

Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

15 Thou didst tread the sea with thine horses, The heap of mighty waters.

16 I heard, and my belly trembled,

My lips quivered at the voice ;

Rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in my place :

That I should rest in the day of trouble,

When it cometh up against the people which invadeth him in troops.

17 For though the fig tree shall not blossom, Neither shall fruit be in the vines ;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat ;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls :

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

19 Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,

And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,

And will make me to walk upon mine high places.

For the Chief Musician, on my stringed instruments.

**Chap. 3.** This chapter, said in the preface to be a "prayer," is not exclusively or even chiefly prayer in its strict sense; though it begins with prayer and closes with most wonderful utterances of simple faith and exulting joy in God. The chapter is chiefly *song*, embodying as the immediate answer to his prayer what is technically called a "*theophany*"—i.e., a manifestation of God to His prophet—to his mental, not bodily eye, we must suppose; bringing up before him in vivid review the glorious things God had wrought for His people in ancient days. The special aim was to reveal God as seen in His glorious power, and in His loving faithfulness to His chosen people, so that the prophet should see that Jehovah is verily great and glorious, and especially worthy to be *trusted* as the enduring protector of His own people. It was under the influence of this sublimely grand manifestation of Jehovah, that the prophet makes at the close such an utterance of his simple faith and of his unbounded joy and triumph in the God of his salvation. The publication of this song, in connection with the revelation of such calamities, was designed to inspire the same faith and joy in the believing portion of the people as it had done in the prophet's own soul. H. C.

The "prayer" or "ode" of Habakkuk is the human echo to the Divine voice which, through the two previous chapters, we have heard denouncing judgment. That voice had pronounced a doom to be executed, first on Judah by the fierce and cruel Chaldean for the iniquity of the land, and then on the Chaldean himself, for his cruelty, and because he defied his own power, making his sword his god. To this voice the prophet has listened with deep and growing agitation. And now he prays both that, if the doom must come, it may come speedily and not tarry; and that mercy may come as well as wrath (verse 2). That his prayer may have the strength and fervor of hope, he recalls the most signal manifestations of the Divine glory made to Israel in past ages, comforting himself with the thought that, whenever God has appeared to "stamp down nations," it has been that He might save those who trusted in Him, "and rescue His anointed" (verses 3-15). This magnificent "theophany" occupies the place of honor in the ode, which indeed is mainly taken up with it. All that the poet has to add is a description of the emotions with which it has inspired him. He still trembles as he "awaits the day of tribulation;" but his faith has been so invigorated by his review of the merciful and glorious "end"

of past judgments, that, even as he trembles, he rejoices in God as his salvation and his strength (verses 16-19). This, in general, is the course and sequence of thought in the ode of Habakkuk. *Cor.*

**1.** *A prayer of Habakkuk.* Prayer is taken in its widest sense, beginning with devout supplication, and including grateful commemoration of past, and announcement of future mercies. B. C.

According to Habakkuk and David, prayer is not the mere utterance of desire in the simplest forms of speech; nor is it always even a direct address to the Almighty. It includes much more. It is often and mainly a devout meditation on God, on His works and providence and on our relations to Him; it is a meditation on spiritual facts and verities, conducted under a reverent and stimulating sense of the Divine presence. It is thinking *with God* in all our thoughts. *Cor.*

"Upon Shigionoth," refers to the music in which this song was to be sung—no doubt lofty, bold, triumphal, in keeping with the strain of the sentiment. H. C.

**2-15.** First comes the earnest prayer (verse 2), uttered in terror, but in faith, that the work of God may be revived in the interval between the announcement and final execution of judgment, a prayer accompanied with the assurance that when judgment is executed, it will be tempered with mercy. Then verses 3-15 give the answer to the prayer, and confirm the assurance. In prophetic vision (verses 3-15) the past work of God is *revived*, reproduced in living action. As of old God manifested Himself, so will He go forth again with even more terrific and stupendous display of majesty and glory; the immediate effect being the infliction of retributive judgment upon the heathen, but the final and true object being the salvation of His people.

"Thou dost tread the earth in fury,  
In wrath Thou dost thresh heathens;  
Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people,  
For salvation with Thine anointed." (Verses 12, 13)

This portion concludes with special details showing the character and the cause of the judgment which would at a future time be executed upon the Chaldeans.

**2.** *Revive Thy work.* A good and true rendering; the work of the Lord endures, goes on without ceasing, at all times, but it comes forth, so to speak, in living act at certain great crises; it is then manifested and vividly apprehended. Here the prophet prays that the old work of deliverance, repeated at each great critical

epoch in the history of Israel, may be distinctly present, as a living reality, to the minds of the people. B. C.

What this Divine work is he puts beyond doubt in the verses that follow, in which he recalls the most splendid manifestations of the glory of God that had been vouchsafed to his fathers in past generations. At the giving of the Law on Sinai, through the perils of the Exodus, under the rule of the Judges, there had been "theophanies," which, however grand and terrible in form, were nevertheless full of grace; robed in light and majesty, God had appeared to give a law unto Israel and to save them out of the hand of all their enemies. This is the work (Ps. 90 : 16) which Habakkuk entreats God to call to life again, to renew, to supplement, and to complete. Let Him appear in the midst of the years, between the threatening and the infliction of doom, as of old He appeared to the fathers, to republish His law, to deliver His people from their foes; to make Himself known to the faithless sons of faithless sires, in the glory of His goodness and compassion, that, when the doom fails, they may take refuge in Him. The heavens are now dark with menace; they will hereafter be yet darker with judgment; but, in the middle space, let there be some little light, that men's hearts may not wholly fail them for fear.

But he is not content with urging and urging the same prayer in the same or similar words. "*In wrath remember mercy*" is, in effect, the same prayer in other words. For the "work" which he implores God to revive is that manifestation of mercy and longsuffering patience by which all past revelations of His wrath have been attempered. There is "wrath" now in the threatening; there will be "wrath" hereafter in the infliction of judgment: meantime, let there be such a disclosure of Divine "mercy" that as men "await the day of tribulation," and "when he that shall attack them cometh up," if "trembling seize their breast," they may yet be "joyful in the God of their salvation," though "the cornfields bear no food," and "the fold be empty of the flock, and there be no ox in the stall."

This is the "*prayer*" of Habakkuk the prophet, a prayer which the ode simply unfolds in the most sublime and various forms. The whole chapter is but a development of this thought, a grand fugue of which this is the theme. And the prayer conclusively proves that Habakkuk had seized on these intimations of the merciful end of Divine judgment, which we are so apt to overlook, in the revelations

with which he had already been inspired. It was because he had learned that judgment was "determined for correction," not for destruction (1 : 12), that, in echoing back the Divine voice, he could ask for mercy. He had been taught that Jehovah sitteth in the heavenly temple, ruling all the affairs of men, sweeping away whatever exalted itself against Him, in order that the life of the knowledge of His glory might fill the earth as the waters cover the deep (2 : 20, 14). And therefore he could confidently entreat, "Revive Thy work in the midst of the years, O Jehovah. In wrath remember mercy," knowing that he did but ask what God had resolved to bestow. *Cor.*

2. The language of this prayer, "O Lord, revive Thy work," may be used fitly by all Christians in the way of accommodation, as a prayer for a revival of true religion in the hearts of men. Yet this passage must be interpreted according to the nature of the subject as shown in the context; and this requires us here to apply the words to God's work of saving His people from being utterly ruined by the Chaldean invasion, then close at hand. H. C.

3. *Slah.* This and verse 9 are the only passages in which the word occurs out of the Book of Psalms; its use here shows that the hymn was intended for recitation in the temple; it denotes a musical pause. B. C.

### 3, 4.

"God cometh from Teman,  
The Holy One from the mountains of Paran,  
His splendour covereth the heavens,  
And the earth is full of His glory.  
The brightness is like that of the sun;  
Rays stream forth from His hand:  
And there His glory is hid."

Sinai is not mentioned in these verses, and yet this is simply a poetic conception of the giving of the Law at Sinai, as no student of the Hebrew Scriptures can doubt; for there is hardly a phrase in these verses which is not borrowed from Moses or Deborah. The song in which "Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death," opens thus:

"Jehovah came from Sinai,  
And rose up upon them from Seir;  
He shone out from the mountains of Paran,  
And He came forth from the myriads of His angels,  
Flashing forth rays of fire upon them from His right hand." (De. 33 : 2.)

The leading image in the verses both of Moses and of Habakkuk is that of a sunrise. As they conceived the scene, the glory of God rose on the children of Israel encamped under Sinai, as the sun rises in the east when the morning spreads down the mountains. Moses

speaks of Jehovah as *rising up, as shining forth, as flashing forth fiery rays*. Habakkuk expressly says that His brightness was *like that of the sun*, that His *splendor covered the heavens*, that the earth was *full of His glory*, that *rays streamed forth from His hand*. The image is at once natural and sublime. The Israelites were camped in the wilderness before the mount. Above them towered the grim rugged peaks of Sinai. It was *this* mountain, on which the glory of the Lord was seen, over which the Divine Sun rose upon them. But far away, across the desert, in the distant east, two other lofty ranges lifted their crests to heaven: the one was the limestone range of Edom, of which Mount Seir was the highest peak; the other was the mountains of Paran, which formed the southern wall of Canaan. As these lofty ranges lay to the east, or, more strictly, the northeast, of Sinai, the sun, which the children of Israel saw pouring its light over the peaks and crags of Sinai, must first have "risen up on Mount Seir," and "shone out on the mountains of Paran." To them that would be the natural course of the sun. It would rise in the distant east, behind the ranges of Paran and Edom; having topped these ranges, it would shine full upon Sinai, and then, climbing the summit of Sinai, it would shine down, with fiery rays, on the camp of Israel. Of this figure Moses availed himself when describing the manifestation of the Divine glory. God came to them, as a sun, to give them light—came clothed with majesty as with a garment. And, to give effect to the figure, he drapes it in forms borrowed from the sunrise as it would appear to the Israelites encamped beneath the mountain.

Deborah, in her song of praise and triumph, takes up the same imagery, varying it, however, to adapt it to her purpose. She sings:

"Lord, when Thou *wentest out of Seir*,  
When Thou *marchedst out of the field of Edom*,  
The earth trembled,  
The heavens dropped,  
The mountains melted from before the Lord,  
Even Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel."  
(Judges 5: 4, 5.)

Possessed by thoughts of battle and victory, Deborah conceives of the manifestation on Sinai under the figure of a *march*, but the *march of the sun* on its course. To her it seems that, issuing from the lofty terraces of Seir, God had advanced across the desert till He reached Sinai, where He stood, revealing Himself in His glory, causing all its rugged edges to meet and flow into beauty.

Habakkuk takes up both the thought of Deb-

orah and that of Moses. But, first, he simply expands that of the man of God. As he gazes on the vision, the land of Edom (of which *Teman* is but another name) rises before him with its double range of red sands and limestone hills; and over against these hills "the mountains of Paran," separated from them only by the deep valley of the Ghor. In the southwestern desert lies the range of Sinai, and beyond it the fathers of Israel are encamped. He sees God rise and come, like a sun, over Teman and Paran, advance higher and higher till He tops the crest of Sinai, and shines down upon the camp, his splendor covering the heavens, His glory filling the earth. The one thought he adds to Moses is one of the most sublime in the ode. After dwelling on the "splendor" and "glory" of God, His "brightness," and the "rays that stream forth from His hand," the prophet affirms that even in all these the "glory" of God "is *hid*" rather than revealed. The sun shines with no borrowed light, in it is no darkness at all; and therefore it may be taken as our best symbol of the Almighty, of "the Holy One" who cannot tolerate sin. The law given on Sinai was a good law, disclosing much of God's will, as much as men were able to bear. But God is brighter than the sun; He is more and better than the law can reveal. The heavens do declare the glory of God, but not fully; the statutes given to Israel are broad and pure, but not broad enough to contain all the thoughts of God, nor pure enough to do more than shadow forth "the Holy One." Even in the rays that stream forth from Him, His glory is *hid* as well as revealed.

6, 7. The prophet still has Sinai in his mind. The great tempest beneath which the primeval mountain "quaked greatly," and "was altogether in a smoke," finds an echo in his verse. But, like Deborah, he now conceives of the Divine advent, not as a sunrise, but as a march. Once more God is coming forth from Teman and Paran, crossing the crags of Sinai, to defend and redeem His people. As He pauses in His march, collecting His forces for the battle, all nature is convulsed; the earth quakes, the mountains crumble, the hills sink; as He looks with threatening aspect on their foes, *the nations tremble*; they are amazed and melt with fear. Once more Jehovah treads the ways that are His from of old. That the scene is still in the Sinaitic Desert, and that Habakkuk has the song sung by Moses on the margin of the Red Sea in his mind, is apparent from the fact that, among the nations which are to tremble,



he mentions "Cushan" and "Midian." For the Midianites occupied the territory which stretches between the mountain range of Sinai and the gulf of the Red Sea (Elatitic Gulf); while "Cushan" is but a lengthened form of "Cush," which lay on the other side of the range, and was the home of "the blameless Ethiopians." What the poet intends to convey is that, in his vision, the mighty tempest which blew around the feet of Jehovah as He stood on the peaks of Sinai still raged, and carried fear to the nations on either side of the range, to the *African* and to the *Arabian* tribes. But this thought he conveys in poetic images, telling us that, under the stress of this mighty tempest, he saw the tents of Cushan under affliction, and the tent-curtains of Midian tremble. In plain prose the verse means that both the tribes that lay under the very shadow of Sinai, and those who were afar off, came, and would come, within the circle of the Divine judgments.

As in imagination Habakkuk saw the glory revealed on Sinai, and stood with Moses by the Red Sea, taking part in the song of triumph, it was but natural that he should select for special mention the dividing of the Red Sea, and of the deep rapid waters of the Jordan—the two great kindred miracles in which Jehovah appeared to and for His people, the one at the commencement, the other at the close of their pilgrimage through the desert. It is in allusion to these miracles that he breaks into the impetuous and vehement inquiry, verse 8. Of course he expects no answer to the question. Such a question is, indeed, the strongest form of affirmation. *Cox.*

**9. *Selah.*** The pause, denoted by *Selah*, marks a sentence of peculiar solemnity. It introduces a new series of images, representing the convulsions of nature at the coming of the Judge.

**11.** "Sun, moon stood each in his dwelling;" withdrew and hid himself in terror at the Divine presence. A magnificent figure, and, like all true poetry, true to nature—a vivid portraiture of the thick darkness of the mid-tempest. It is as though the sun, and, as the storm rages on without ceasing, the moon withdrew into the tabernacle of enshrouding cloud. Compare the imagery of the eighteenth Psalm, 7-14, specially the eleventh verse: "He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies." B. C.

#### 10-13.

"The mountains see Thee; they writhe;  
The rain-torrent sweepeth along;

The abyss lifteth up its voice,  
It drencheth its hands on high;  
Sun and moon draw back into their habitations  
At the light of Thine arrows shooting by,  
At the lightning splendors of Thy spear.  
In fury Thou dost march through the earth;  
Thou dost stamp down nations in Thy wrath.  
Thou goest forth to the rescue of Thy people,  
To the rescue of Thine anointed."

Storm, earthquake and battle all lend their terrors to the scene that now passes before the poet's eye. The world trembles and splits, mighty torrents gushing out from the rents, so that "the earth is cloven with rivers," the mountains writhe in agony as they gaze, affrighted, on the armed and incensed King of Heaven; torrents of rain lash and obscure the air; the "abyss"—*i.e.*, the great deep of waters, is shaken into violent commotion, flinging up its billows to heaven and beating its shores with the hoarse roar of its waves. The sun does not now stand still on Gibeon, or the moon in the valley of Ajalon, as in the day of Joshua's famous victory; they sullenly retire into their chambers, eclipsed by the still more vivid splendor of the arrows shot from the Divine bow, and of the spear which He hurls, like lightning, from his hand. In short, to the excited imagination of the poet, it seems that the fair ordered cosmos is resolved into its chaotic elements; once more "the earth is without form and void;" once more "darkness broods on the face of the deep." Once more, too, "the Spirit of God moves on the face of the waters," to bring order from confusion, and to fill the void with forms of beauty. For as the prophet draws his theophany to a close, he sees, and lets us see, the gracious and redeeming purpose for the accomplishment of which God has come forth from the secret places of His pavilion. He marches in fury through the earth, stamping down in His march the nations who set themselves against His people; but His aim is not vengeance so much as rescue, the rescue of the race whom He has chosen and anointed, and in whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. "Evil to *men*" is often "good for *man*;" often the welfare of humanity can only be secured by the removal of those who oppose themselves to it, just as in the natural world destruction is a constant condition of welfare and advance. So that when God manifests Himself *for* salvation, He must often manifest Himself *in* destruction; but His aim, His end, is ever gracious. His will is the salvation of men. On this conviction Habakkuk stays his soul as the glory of the Lord passes before him,

oppressing him with its terrors. He had great need of such a stay, for the theophany now robes itself in forms drawn from the darkest memories of the past, and full of threatening omens for the future. When Habakkuk sings—

"Thou dashest in pieces the head of the house of the wicked,  
Laying bare the foundations to the very neck,"

we find it very difficult to catch his meaning; but the Hebrews would soon seize his allusion to the fate of Siserā. The poet had been recalling scene after scene from the ancient chronicles of their race, tracing the Divine manifestations made to them from the giving of the Law to the conquest of Canaan. Now of the Canaanitish tribes none seem to have been so powerful as that of which Jabin was king, and Hazor the capital. We are expressly told that Hazor was "the head of all those kingdoms." To this phrase Habakkuk refers.

**14, 15.** After a solemn pause, Habakkuk resumes his theme—viz., the triumph of Israel in the discomfiture of their foes. Not only is "the head of the house of the wicked," the captain of the adverse host, destroyed; the warlike tribes who follow him share his fate. Like a mighty tempest the Canaanitish hordes "stormed up," thinking "to break" Israel, with whom the prophet identifies himself, "to powder," as the tempest whirls up, and breaks, and disperses the chaff. Like a robber, a free-booter, who lurks in secret places, who rejoices when the moment arrives at which he may set on the defenceless traveller, and snatch from him life and goods, so they beset the children of Israel. But God "pierced their heads with their own spears," smiting them with confusion and bewilderment, so that they turned their weapons on themselves; "and every man's sword was against his fellow," and "every one helped to destroy another."

But above all this vast heaving sea of confusion, God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, holds fast the redeeming purpose of His love. As of old His Spirit moved on the face of the deep, so now He comes treading on the sea, riding on the heaving waters in the chariots of salvation, advancing to an assured triumph, a foreseen victory:

"Thou treadest upon the sea,  
Thy horses upon the heaving waters."

That which alone gives order to the confusions of history, and evolves from them a fair and hopeful significance, is the merciful purpose of God, which, ever seeking the welfare and

advance of humanity, compels even the darkest tragedies to contribute to its common and ultimate good.

Loaded as his ode is with local and historical allusions, it seems nevertheless to gather into one all displays of the Divine glory, to generalize upon them, to give us the pattern, the type to which they all conform. It is too large in style, too sublime in tone, to be taken merely as a picture of any one "appearance." It sums them all up, and teaches us what essential characteristics they have in common. Whenever God appears to men and for men, nature recognizes and responds to His presence, trembling before the majesty in which it nevertheless rejoices. Whenever He appears, signs and wonders and judgments attend His coming, the thoughts of men's hearts are revealed, their secrets laid bare, their iniquities punished. Whenever and wherever He appears to judge and destroy, it is that He may rescue men from their bonds, to give liberty to the captive, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort them that mourn, to give them beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Always and everywhere "the day of vengeance of our God" proclaims and ushers in "the acceptable year of the Lord." Even when He makes bare His bow and launches His spear, He rides in chariots of *salvation* to rescue His anointed and to redeem His people.

**16-19.** It is because Habakkuk is strong in his conviction of the redeeming "end" of judgment, that he closes his ode with expressions of patient and joyful trust which have never been surpassed in the tone of tender and unalterable fidelity they breathe:

"I heard, and trembling seized my breast;  
My lips quivered at the sound;  
Rottenness penetrates my bones;  
I tremble under myself  
That I am silently to await the day of tribulation,  
When he that shall attack me cometh up.  
*For though the fig-tree will not blossom  
And there be no yield on the vines,  
The fruit of the olive fails,  
And the corn-fields bear no food,  
The fold is empty of the flock,  
And there is no ox in the stall;  
Yet in Jehovah will I rejoice,  
I will be joyful in the God of my salvation.  
Jehovah the Lord is my strength,  
And maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
And causeth me to walk in my high places."* Car.

The sentiment of the seventeenth verse is that though everything else should fail, the fig-tree, the vine, the olive, the fields, the flocks and the herds, yet the everlasting God

would still live and never could fail or be cut off, or be any the less a faithful and glorious God for all the storms of earth, or for the invasion and desolating sweep of the most savage robber hosts. The last verse heightens the showing of His joy. Elastic and buoyant, His feet like the feet of the hind who bounds over the cliffs and never makes a mis-step on the crags of the mountain—so He moves along the high places of the earth, all undisturbed by the storms and troubles that harass the dwellers in the vales below. It seems plain that the prophet was brought to this sublime height and placid rest of faith by means of those vivid, soul-thrilling views of God presented in this chapter, in which God is seen in His great works of mercy and of power in behalf of His people. Herein lie the special instruction and the great value of this wonderful chapter. In point of literary merit, its beauty and sublimity are of the highest order, and challenge our intense admiration; but far above and better than all those beauties is the sublime moral lesson it teaches—viz., that if any "good man would fix his hand upon the skies and bid earth roll, nor feel her idle whirl," the rational mode of reaching this sublime repose of faith is to study the great works of God's power and mercy as found in the historic pages of His Word, and as first revealed from heaven in the ways of His providence and miracle-working power toward His people in the days of old. This study of God, deep, appreciative, prayerful, with the aid of His teaching Spirit, must be the one great condition on our part—a trustful, believing study, with a loving and appropriating faith. Such a study of God, with such help from His Spirit, give their utmost vividness and power to those great truths respecting God which we need to see and feel as realities. It is beyond measure blessed to have the soul thus filled with the practical impression of those truths! Then what was only as a dream before, becomes reality, clearly seen and deeply felt, and then it becomes natural and easy to adjust one's heart and life to the demands of those truths. They call for implicit faith in God; impressed by such views of God, and drawn by His Spirit, we seem spontaneously to yield it. So Habakkuk found his heart full of the simplest, sweetest trust in God, and in God alone—in God, though everything else should fail.

It should have been more distinctly noted that the fig tree and the vine stand here to represent, not themselves alone, but every other earthly good. They stand for home and dear

ones, for country and sanctuary, for safety of person and for dear life. Although all these should fail, yet, said the prophet, will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. In the same spirit, a psalmist said: "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever" (Ps. 73: 26). H. C.

When sensible comforts are withheld or withdrawn, *then* to rely upon God's promises, and go forward in duty just as if we experienced them, that is true faith, great faith, unmingled faith. And that is the faith taught by trial. Blessings will teach gratitude, but not this kind of faith. Blessings, indeed, are so apt to accustom the soul to sight, that except by the very peculiar care and discipline of God's grace, a long uninterrupted continuance of them unfits the soul for faith; so that when the accustomed tide of blessings begins to fail, and a discipline of want or darkness intervenes, the soul begins to imagine itself deserted of God, begins to faint, forgetful of the exhortation which speaketh as unto children concerning the rebukes of God; perhaps stops short in the course of duty, just as if God's comforts and not God were its guide, its support, its index and its impulse. But that is faith in sight, not faith in God. Faith in God must be taught, as well as rejoicing and gratitude in God's comforts. The soul must be taught to toil on in the wilderness, without repining, water or no water, confident in God. For this purpose, to teach this habit of faith, it may be necessary for God to cut off the soul from every stay, and throw it entirely and only upon Himself and His promises. This is the faith of which the example is so beautiful in Habakkuk. This is faith in God, and not merely in God's blessings; it is faith and joy in God, irrespective of His blessings. G. B. C.

**18. Yet I will rejoice.** A great word, with many an echo in the New Testament, as, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice." The two words chosen by Habakkuk imply exultation and strong emotion, the outcome of the faith which gives life and fulness of joy. *Of my salvation.* A word expressing most fully the ground of the prophet's rejoicing; it refers specially to verses 8, 13; and shows also how thoroughly Habakkuk realized the promise of 2: 4. B. C.

He is yours who possesseth all things, and what can you want? He is yours who can do all things, and what should you fear? He is yours who is goodness and love itself, how then can you be miserable, or what imperfec-

tion can there be in your felicity? His faithfulness is pledged to make all things work together for your good. The most afflictive events, like the furnace or pruning hook, shall only purge away your dross, or render you more fruitful. So that you may well rejoice in the Lord. R. W.

Those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished can enjoy all in God; and can sit down upon the ruins of creature comforts, and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that He is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation; and if He be so, we may rejoice in Him as such in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Joy in God is never out of season; nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear that our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. H.

So jubilant is the heart of the man whose soul is filled and feasted with the God of his salvation, and the salvation of his God. True Christianity is a joyful thing, not indeed with foolish laughter like the crackling of thorns under a pot, but with a joy too deep to be loud, too pure to be transient. Such a man has all the sources and motives for joy which the heart can ask. Salvation unfolds into manifold gladnesses—rare and profound. There is in it forgiveness, which makes us "hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast

broken may rejoice." There is companionship with God and Christ, and such society makes "our hearts burn within us." There is obedience to His will, and then His statutes become the "joy of our hearts." There is a bright hope beyond, and "in that hope of the glory of God we can rejoice." We are independent of externals, possessing that which no change can affect and of which nothing can bereave us. So we can sing the old song: "Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." How different the false and fleeting joys of earth, when men resort to their broken cisterns that can hold no water! The grim words of the prophet are only too true about all other springs of gladness: "They came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty. They were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." A. M.

A heart rejoicing in God delights in all His will, and is surely provided with the most firm joy in all estates; for if nothing can come to pass beside or against His will, then cannot that soul be vexed which delights in Him and hath no will but His, but follows Him at all times, in all estates, not only when He shines bright on them, but when they are clouded. That flower which follows the sun doth so even in dark and cloudy days; when it doth not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it. So the soul that moves after God keeps that course when He hides His face; is content, yea, even glad at His will in all estates, conditions, or events. *Abp. Leighton.*

## PROPHECY OF ZEPHANIAH.

### ZEPHANIAH, INTRODUCTION; CHAPTER I.

**I : 1** THE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

**2, 3** I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the  
**4** ground, saith the LORD. And I will stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name  
**5** of the Chemarim with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the house-tops; and them that worship, which swear to the LORD and swear by Malcam; and them

that are turned back from following the LORD ; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired after him.

7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God : for the day of the LORD is at hand : for  
8 the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath sanctified his guests. And it shall come to pass  
in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all  
9 such as are clothed with foreign apparel. And in that day I will punish all those that leap  
10 over the threshold, which fill their master's house with violence and deceit. And in that  
day, saith the LORD, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from  
11 the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh,  
for all the people of Canaan are undone : all they that were laden with silver are cut off.  
12 And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles ; and I will  
punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, The LORD will not do  
13 good, neither will he do evil. And their wealth shall become a spoil, and their houses a  
desolation : yea, they shall build houses, but shall not inhabit them ; and they shall plant  
14 vineyards, but shall not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the LORD is near, it is near and  
hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD ; the mighty man crieth there bitterly.  
15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation,  
16 a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet  
and alarm, against the fenced cities, and against the high battlements. And I will bring distress  
17 upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the  
LORD : and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. Neither their  
silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath ; but the  
whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy : for he shall make an end, yea, a  
terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land.

### Introduction.

OF this prophet, his own introduction gives us the names of his immediate ancestors through four generations, of whom, however, nothing is known to us certainly except their names. It gives also the much more important statement that this word of the Lord came to him in the days of Josiah, king of Judah. Josiah's reign of thirty-one years fell B.C. 642-611. A careful comparison of this Book of Zephaniah with the history of Josiah's reign, as found 2 K., chaps. 22 and 23, and yet more fully 2 Chron., chaps. 34 and 35, will throw yet more light upon the precise date of his writings and upon the much more important point of its definite aim and purpose. Let it be borne in mind that after the great reformation wrought by Hezekiah with the aid of Isaiah and other prophets during his reign of twenty-nine years, a fearful relapse followed during Manasseh's long reign of fifty-five years ; that the brief history sets forth in very strong terms the horrible influence of this wicked king, who " made Jerusalem and Judah do worse than the heathen" (2 Chron. 33 : 9) ; that his repentance occurring late in life, while it may have saved his own soul in answer to a godly father's prayers, yet seems scarcely to have at all arrested the strong currents of national wickedness ; that his son Amon, reigning two years most wickedly, and then losing his life by conspiracy among his

own servants, must have left the nation yet waxing worse and worse ; and then that Josiah, coming to the throne at the tender age of eight years, began to seek after the God of his fathers at the age of sixteen, commenced a vigorous reform yet four years later—*i.e.*, at the age of twenty, which was the twelfth year of his reign, and had gone over the work with commendable thoroughness at the end of six years' labor—*i.e.*, in the eighteenth year of his reign. That was the era of a remarkable passover, kept with great solemnity and with hopeful results. But the roots of wickedness had gone deep into the national life. Hence this reform, as to the mass of the nation, could not have penetrated much beneath the surface. This reign of the good Josiah was the Lord's last call of the nation to repentance. Toward this result, Zephaniah and Jeremiah lent their aid—the latter beginning to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah, and the former probably about the same time. Zephaniah (1 : 4) predicts : " I will cut off the remnant of Babel from this place," etc., and the history states (2 Chron. 34 : 3, 4) that Josiah began this very work in his twelfth year, and closed it in his eighteenth. It may also be noted that Zephaniah (2 : 13-15) predicts the fall of Nineveh, which occurred B.C. 625—*i.e.*, in the seventeenth year of Josiah. It was to aid King Josiah in his great work of reforming the nation and of saving it from ruin under the long-accumulating wrath of God, that Zeph-

aniah was commissioned to reiterate the solemn declarations of Jehovah—"I will utterly consume this whole land"—especially every vestige of its idolatry, and not sparing its fearfully corrupt and wicked people. This is the one great thought throughout the first chapter. The next chapter heightens the force of this dread decree by assuring the people that the adjacent nations, sunk low in general corruption and idol worship, were also doomed to fearful devastations—the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia and Assyria, with her proud capital, Nineveh. In this general sweep of desolating judgments Judah could by no means hope to escape, save by earnest and thorough repentance before God. Chapter 3 sets forth yet more fully the extreme corruption of her prophets, priests and princes, but closes with merciful promises of salvation in a future day for the remnant of His people. II. C.

It was the prophet's task to interpret the facts of his time, the omens and portents in the hearts and consciences of men. In the Scythian inland he saw a symbol of future invasions still more destructive and fatal; in *that* day of darkness he described the portents of a still greater and more terrible day of the Lord—a day of fury, a day of anguish and distress, a day of desolation and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of cloud and of cloudy night, a day of the trumpet and the trumpet blast, a true *diez ira*, the terrors of which should cover the whole earth and shake the hearts of all its inhabitants with fear and trembling. Neither Judah nor Jerusalem should be spared in that day. Nay, the judgment would *begin* at the house of God. Nor was that day distant; it was even now sweeping up like chaff driven before the wind. Nor must they hope to escape it; "not even their silver, not even their gold," would be able to rescue them in the day of the Lord's fury. If they were wise, they would not so much as wish to escape it; for this day of judgment was also a day of sovereign mercy. The very heathen were to be smitten by its terrors, in order that all nations, "every one from its place, might worship Him," the only true God, and find rest in serving Him; while of the Jews, as many as humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God should "see evil no more;" Jehovah would reveal Himself in their midst as "the Mighty One who saves;" He would dwell among them and rejoice over them now in the silent ecstasy of a love which can find no words, and again in the rapture which breathes itself in cries of joy. This, in brief,

is the general scope and purport of Zephaniah's pathetic and sublime poem. *Cor.*

His theme appears to be judgment, but on closer inspection that is seen to be but a means to the real end and goal of the prophet's hopes, to wit, the creation of the kingdom of God among men. The judgment is, therefore, conceived not as an outburst of Divine anger, not as mere retribution on sin, but as a purging and remedial process destined to issue in redemption. Traces of Old Testament limitation of idea there are throughout, but the prophet's conception should win our admiration for its large-hearted comprehensiveness. As all nations are included in the judgment, so all peoples are embraced in the regeneration. If the heavenly kingdom has as its centre Zion and its kernel Israel, nevertheless its citizenship covers mankind, and its circumference is wide as the world. Preliminary fulfilments of the prophet's predictions history speedily furnished, but the vision he saw and the truths he taught will not be exhausted till God's government of men in its twofold aspect of judgment and of mercy be complete. *Elastic.*

In "the goodly fellowship of the prophets" Zephaniah is conspicuous for the comprehensiveness of his words. He does not confine himself to the destiny of his own people. When he mentions other nations, he seems to single out from west and east, south and north (2: 4-15), such as would serve as examples of his great subject—the universal government of God as Judge of all. His far-reaching gaze takes in the judgments and mercies of God as extending over all the earth (1: 1-3; 2: 11; 3: 8, 9). He has indeed no prediction of the Messiah Himself, but he foresees the time when all nations shall unite in the worship of the true God (3: 9). Hence his short book has been well described by Bucer as "a compendium of all prophecy." And this peculiarity agrees well with the frequent use he makes of the earlier Scriptures. In his own language, if not in a translation, his familiarity with the words of Deuteronomy and Isaiah is constantly seen. B. C.

**Chap. I.** The prophet perceives the imminent end of the present age of human sin and Divine patience; final judgment is decreed, it falls with destructive force on all classes of religious offenders in Jerusalem (1: 2-7). Every form of sin in every quarter—luxury, violence, dishonesty, indifference—shall be reached, and receive inevitable retribution (1: 8-13). For near is the great day of judgment, terrible, resistless, not to be bought off, universal and final

(1:14-18). *Elmslie*.—For the general scope of this chapter the reader is referred to 2 K. 23:26, 27.

3. The stumbling-blocks are the idol gods which have proved such a stumbling-block of ruin to the people. This shows that the reformation under Josiah entirely failed to save the land from its sins, and hence from its deserved doom.

4. God would utterly finish the destruction of Baal, including the idols, their priests, and their worshippers, and would exterminate the very "name of the Chemarims," a word always applied by the Jews to the priests of idols. The history (2 K. 23:5) states that Josiah put down the Chemarims, "whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places," etc.; but ultimately the Lord, by the long captivity in Babylon, made much more thorough work in rooting them out from among His people and burying their very name in oblivion. H. C.

5, 6. From the *priests* the prophet passes to the people; and the very form of his language, which cannot be preserved in a translation, indicates that he divided them into three classes: open idolaters; those who professed to worship God and really served idols; such as in other ways had cast off the fear of God. B. C.

7. Silence in the spirit of profound reverence and solemn awe is enjoined, "because the day of the Lord is near," a day of judgment on the people. "The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice"—here in the sense of a great slaughter, as in Isa. 34:6: "The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea."

9. The parallel clause—"who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit"—*i.e.*, with goods, property, obtained by violence and deceit, shows that robbers are thought of. Hence the probable sense of leaping upon the threshold is, invading the sanctity of other men's houses; violently leaping upon and over their thresholds, to enter their houses for robbery and spoil. H. C.

12, 13. The enemy that has entered by the northern gate and made his way to the southern side will not only overthrow all who stand in his way, and the traders in the *Martar*, he will enter the houses of the rich who live at ease, and will ransack them. He will search every nook and corner as *with candles*. (Cf. Luke 15:8.) The moral condition of these Jewish epicureans that called for this severe punishment is expressed by the prophet in a forcible figure, *they are settled on their lees*, more

literally in the margin, *curded or thickened*. The language is very like that of Jeremiah respecting Moab, *he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel* (48:11), but it is stronger. The wine had not only remained undisturbed, acquiring strength and flavor, it had become *thick*. This expresses the apathy, the spiritual insensibility of the rich. They, like Dives in the parable, are not charged with any gross sins, but they had become blind to all tokens of God's moral government. Therefore the possessions in which they put their trust would be torn from them. Nothing short of this would rouse them. It seems to be implied that they would go on building and planting to the last. (Cf. Amos 5:11; Luke 17:26-30.) They would bring on themselves the very curse foretold by Moses, De. 28:30, 39, as the contrary blessings are promised in Isa. 65:22. B. C.

12. He condenses into one expressive figure the characteristic and prevailing tone of its inhabitants. They were "*drunken together on their lees*" (verse 12), or, to express the figure fully, they were like wine that is settled on its lees, taking harsh and foul flavors from its dregs. That is to say, they were exalting themselves on their lusts, resting on what was vilest in them, on the sediment and refuse of their nature; their whole character was being impregnated with the harsh fumes of their baser passions; they were taking their tone from that in them which was lowest and worst. Fixed in their devotion to the flesh and the world, they were *saying in their hearts*, "*Jehovah doeth neither good nor evil*." They were not at the pains to deny His existence. They had not reasoned themselves into atheism. They were not so utterly foolish as to say, even in their hearts, "There is no God." But though they did not deny God, they forgot Him. They had no vital faith in Him or in His administration of human affairs. For them He sat in heaven, heedless what men did, suffering the world to take its own course, not penetrating and guiding that course with the pure counsels of His eternal will, neither causing all things to work together for the good of them that served Him, nor executing His idle threats against the rebellious and ungodly. Why, then, should they fear Him? What profit should they have if they served Him? Why not give the reins to their lusts, and carry themselves as though there were no God? In short, they had sunk into that practical but unreasoned atheism so common in large cities, when their inhabitants have long been corrupted with luxury and vice. It

is this practical atheism, the atheism of the market place and the stews, which the prophet sets himself to rebuke. Because they have eyes and yet cannot see God in the ordinary and benignant course of His providence, He will come out of His place to judge and to condemn them. Because, when their days go lightly and smoothly they forget Him who "sets their days upon the score," He will send them a day of terrors on which their very heart and flesh will cry out for God. He will come to them. He will go through the city making diligent search, trying house by house, man by man. As the vintner goes through his cellars, torch in hand ; or as the head of the household, taper in hand, searches every nook and corner of his house before Passover, lest any morsel of heaven should be hidden in it ; so Jehovah will "search Jerusalem *with candles*," hunting the evil out of every dark nook in which they have concealed themselves, suffering none to escape. No strength will be able to resist Him, no bribe to avert the due reward of their deeds. He will bring evil upon them that they may learn how good He is, how imperatively He demands truth and goodness in men. In their prosperity they have forgotten Him and wronged their own souls ; by the stripes of adversity He will bring them to a better mind and turn their heart back again unto Himself.

**14-18.** As Zephaniah contemplates the scene, as he beholds temple and city and palace fall, and the unhappy thousands who have escaped the sword carried away captive into a strange land, he breaks into that sublime song, that solemn *dis iux* with which the chapter closes :

"The great day of Jehovah is near,  
Near, and hastening greatly.  
Hark ! the day of Jehovah !  
Bitterly shrieketh the mighty man,  
A day of fury is this day,  
A day of anguish and distress,  
A day of desolation and ruin,  
A day of darkness and gloom,  
A day of clouds and of cloudy night,  
▲ day of the trumpet and the trumpet-blast  
Against the fortified cities,  
And against the lofty battlements.  
And I will bring men into straits,  
And they shall walk like the blind,  
Because they have sinned against Jehovah ;  
And their blood shall be poured out like dust,  
And their flesh like dung.  
Even their silver, even their gold,  
Shall not be able to rescue them  
In the day of Jehovah's fury ;  
But in the fire of His wrath  
Shall the whole earth be consumed :  
For He will make an end, yea, a sudden end,  
Of all the inhabitants of the earth."

There are no grander verses, none more sombre and tragic, none in which terror is more picturesque, in the literature of the world. They are to be *felt* rather than critically analyzed and explained. In order to impress on us the terrors of that great day of the Lord, the prophet exhausts the copious Hebrew vocabulary of its terms for gloom and horror. That day is the day of the overflowing irresistible wrath of God ; the day on which men sink into an anguish and distress beyond expression, beyond relief ; the day on which the whole earth is wasted with havoc and broken into ruin ; the day of a darkness so profound that day itself is changed into its very opposite and becomes a night, and a night wrapped in clouds through which no star can shoot a ray of hope ; and out of the thick darkness, stabbing all hearts with an agony of fear, the war-trumpets peal louder and louder, till, in their misery and terror, men "walk like the blind," brooding in a sullen despair over their sins, desperate of escape.

Because the Hebrew prophets were so strong in the conviction of the beneficent uses of "judgments," they could dwell on them as they did. Nothing, for example, is more strange and painful to many minds than the way in which Zephaniah lingers over the details of "the day of judgment." He elaborates his description of it, adding touch to touch, piling epithet on epithet, as though he were reluctant to leave it, as though he took a stern and almost malignant pleasure in contemplating it. Until we understand that Zephaniah believes judgment to be mercy, that he is depicting terrors through which men must pass in order that they may be cleansed by them, and that as they pass through them they may find the mercy in them, we can have no sympathy with him, we can only be repelled by the stern exultation with which he hails the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Nor do I see how we can face the facts of human life, and hold fast our faith in God, until we share Zephaniah's conviction that God judges and afflicts men in order that He may cleanse and restore their souls. Has not every nation in its turn passed through these days of anguish and distress, of ruin and desolation ? Why, then, should we carp at Zephaniah's *words*, when *facts* equally loaded with terror and gloom are the common staple of the human story ? We ought rather to be thankful for his words ; we should rejoice, that even on a day so dark he could see a great light of hope, and teach us to see it. Let us learn of him the



mercy of judgment ; let us hold fast to the conviction that even the judgments which are most penetrating and of the widest sweep are only as a surgeon's probe, which carries a healing balm to the very seat of disease, that they simply sheathe and convey the "saving health" of the Divine compassion and love. *Cor.*

**11.** The day will try every man's work, every man's foothold, of what sort it is. There must be something to hold by. A "belief" will not do it if it is a belief too short to reach from the intellect to the heart and will. A doctrinal theory, a pew in church, an outward conformity, handsome words about your ecclesiastical order spiced with sarcasms on the ways of your neighbors, along with a life intensely absorbed in your business, your family, your reputation, will not answer. There will shine at last a great and scorching light, before which the secrets of all hearts will be opened. There can be no illusion about the right hand and the left. Forewarnings of that separation are written all over your common scenery. The stream sweeps on. Familiar forms vanish. The graves open and close. Your body shows symptoms of wearing out. Whatever the changes may be, is there not "one thing" that is a preparation for them all, and makes a man superior to them all ? F. D. H.

**12.** The destruction of that day will be unavoidable and universal. There shall be no escaping it by ransom ; neither their silver nor their gold, which they have hoarded up so covetously against the evil day, or which they have spent so prodigally, to make friends for such a time, shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. Another prophet borrowed these words from this, with reference to the same event (Ezek. 7 : 19). Riches profit not in the day of wrath (Prov. 11 : 4). Nay, riches expose to the wrath of men (Eccles. 5 : 13), and riches abused to the wrath of God. There shall be no escaping by flight or concealment. H.

The withdrawing of God's presence is the presence of His wrath. While He stays to reprove, there is favor in His displeasure ; but

when He leaves either man or church there is no hope but of vengeance. The final absence of God is hell itself. When He forsakes us, though for a time, it is an introduction to His utmost judgment. *Bp. H.*

To that merciful Jesus whom the superficialness of the present day so often opposes to the wrathful God of the Old Testament, it is to Him that this striking expression is applied in the New : "The wrath of the Lamb." They who deny God the faculty of indignation deny Him, as a direct consequence, the faculty of love, of sincere love ; they substitute for the living God a lifeless notion, a dumb idol of the intellect. *Godet.*

The greatness of Divine wrath appears in this, that though we may attempt it in our thoughts, yet we cannot bring it within the comprehensions of our knowledge. Survey the expressions of Scripture, and see it there clothed and set forth in "fire and brimstone," in "the worm that never dies," in "utter darkness," in "weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." But what are all these but shadows ! mere similitudes, and not things ! condescensions, rather than instructions to our understanding ! poor figurative essays, where, contrary to the nature of rhetoric, the figure is still beneath the truth. Fire no more represents God's wrath than the picture of fire itself represents its heat ; and for the proof of this, let the notional believer be an unanswerable argument, who reads, sees and hears all these expressions, and yet is not at all moved by them ; which sufficiently shows that there is no hell in the description of hell. *South.*

We do but deceive ourselves with names. Hell is nothing but the orb of sin and wickedness, or else that hemisphere of darkness in which all evil moves ; and heaven is the opposite hemisphere of light, or else the bright orb of truth, holiness and goodness ; and we do actually, in this life, instate ourselves in the possession of one or other of them. Take sin and disobedience out of hell, and it will presently clear up into light, tranquillity, serenity, and shine out into a heaven. *Cudworth.*

## ZEPHANIAH, CHAPTERS II., III.

**2 : 1** GATHER yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation that hath no shame ;  
**2** before the decree bring forth, *before* the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the  
**3** LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you. Seek ye the

LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgement : seek righteousness, 4 seek meekness : it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger. For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation : they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and 5 Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites ! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, the land of the Philistines : I will 6 destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. And the sea coast shall be pastures, with 7 cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah : they shall feed *their flocks* thereupon : in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening : for the LORD their God shall visit them, and bring again their cap- 8 tivity. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, wherewith they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. 9 Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, a possession of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation : the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my 10 nation shall inherit them. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached 11 and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. The LORD will be terrible unto them : for he will furnish all the gods of the earth : and men shall worship him, 12 every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations. Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be 13 slain by my sword. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assy- 14 ria : and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations : both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapters thereof : *their voice* shall sing in the windows : desolation shall 15 be in the thresholds : for he hath laid bare the cedar work. This is the joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me : how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in ! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

3 : 1, 2 Woe to her that is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city ! She obeyed not the voice : she received not correction ; she trusted not in the LORD ; she drew not near 3 to her God. Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions ; her judges are evening 4 wolves : they leave nothing till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons : her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The LORD in the midst of her is righteous : he will not do iniquity ; every morning doth he bring 6 his judgement to light, he faileth not ; but the unjust knoweth no shame. I have cut off nations, their battlements are desolate ; I have made their streets waste, that none passeth by : their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive correction ; so her dwelling should not be cut off, *according to* all that I have appointed concerning her : but they rose early and cor- 8 rupted all their doings. Therefore wait ye for me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey : for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the king- 9 doms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger ; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the peoples a pure lan- 10 guage, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall 11 bring mine offering. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me : for then I will take away out of the midst of thee thy proudly 12 exulting ones, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. 13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies ; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth : for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 14 Sing, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O Israel ; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daugh- 15 ter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgements, he hath cast out thine enemy : the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee : thou shalt not fear evil 16 any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not : O Zion, let not thine 17 hands be slack. The LORD thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save ; he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. 18 I will gather them that sorrow for the solemn assembly, who were of thee : *to whom* the bur- 19 den upon her was a reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all them that afflict

thee ; and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven away , and I will make them a praise and a name, whose shame hath been in all the earth. At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you : for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I bring again your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.

**Chap. 2.** This chapter aims to enforce repentance : 1. By the shortness of time yet remaining before otherwise the shafts of vengeance must fall. 2. By the fact that desolating judgments were coming upon other nations contiguous. This fact should assure them that the Lord was about to take in hand the work of retribution upon guilty nations on a broad scale ; that He had His agencies in readiness ; and that Judah and Jerusalem could by no means hope to escape. H. C. — This chapter contains an exhortation to earnest repentance and amendment of their former life, to the end they may escape the threatened evils. For those whom God reproves, except the fault be in themselves, He means to save. Let men change their deeds, and I, saith the Lord, will change My purpose. And this exhortation is often repeated in the present chapter, to the end that those who remained obstinate and stubborn might be without excuse. *Darius.*

**1-3.** In the first section of this poem (chap. 1) Zephaniah denounces on the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the doom which their idolatries and immoralities had provoked ; he denounces that doom with a stern vigor and passion which give his words an edge so keen that even to this day they pierce and wound our hearts. But in the second section he changes his voice ; he modulates it into a key more tender and pathetic. Tones of judgment and righteous indignation still fall on our ears ; but under these, struggling up against them and through them, at times triumphing over them, we catch a strain of compassion. The threatenings of judgment melt into an invitation to repentance. The gracious intention of the Divine "doom" is disclosed. A fruitful rain falls on the soil through which the ploughshare has been driven. Healing balms are laid on the wounds that have been probed and searched. Though his voice still trembles with indignation against "the sinners and their offences," the prophet calls on them to abandon their sins, to seek righteousness and humility ; and, to induce them to repentance and amendment, he declares that the judgment which is soon to sweep across the whole earth will reach its end only as "all the inhabitants of the earth, every one from his place," acknowledge Jehovah to be God and worship Him. This is the

theme of the second section. *The call to repentance* is given in chap. 2, verses 1-3. The general contents of these verses may be summed up thus : The men of Judah, with the fear of God before their eyes, are to consider and test themselves. They have been hardened and unabashed in their iniquity. The Divine judgment is coming on them to compel them to reflection, that they may put themselves and their modes of thought and action to the proof. It is coming quickly, so quickly that they must not think to escape it. Now, if ever, the occasion must be seized, the place for repentance must be found, occupied, secured. They have forgotten and abandoned the Lord their God ; let them seek the Lord. They have been unrighteous ; let them seek righteousness. They have been proud and self-confident ; let them seek humility. In this radical change of spiritual character, attitude, bias, lies their only hope, their sole chance of escaping destruction. *Cbr.*

**2.** "Before" this execution of the Lord's wrath there was a short moment for repentance. The prophet exhorts the people to seize and improve it. H. C.

**3.** In the midst of the guilty nation there were those who would listen to the warning voice. *The meek of the land*, not the poor or the afflicted, but those who were humble toward God, considerate and forbearing toward man. They are further described as having wrought His judgment, not simply obediently to the law in general, but doing what was right in each case. Yet though they have a single eye, they are imperfect. Hence the threefold injunction, *Seek the Lord, seek righteousness, seek meekness*, to strive after higher and higher attainments in that very virtue of which they already possess enough to deserve to be called meek. B. C.

"It may be you shall be hid ; if any be hid, you shall." Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for all things come alike to all, but they are most likely to be hid, and stand fairest for a distinguishing care of Providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully, to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, though they have but the "it may be" of a promise ; and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness, lest they should seem to come short, and should do anything to throw

themselves out of the Divine protection. Note : Those that hold fast their integrity in times of common iniquity have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding place for them, where they shall be safe and easy in times of common calamity. 11.

By his "*peradventure ye may be hidden*" the prophet does not intend to cast any doubt on the security of the humble and the righteous. He intends, rather, to suggest the extreme rigor of the doom he foresees, the difficulty of escaping it, the improbability that a people so callous and proud will seek and find the sole refuge from the storm. All the more he urges them to seek it, nor has he any doubt that if they seek they will find. For why should the prophet call the sinful to repentance if repentance were to be of no avail ? why urge the good to new ardors of righteousness if even these were to be of no avail ? Even thus early we hear the tones of mercy and invitation blending with the tones of denunciation and rebuke, not dominant as yet, yet sounding forth no doubtful promise that the key, the mode, is changing, and that we shall soon be gladdened with a more cheerful and melodious strain. Even thus early we are taught, at least by implication and suggestion, that the judgments of God, however stern, however wide and deep of reach, are sent to summon the wicked to self-examination and repentance, and the good to more earnest and fruitful endeavors after that which is right before God. *Cor.*

4. Proceeding by the coast on the edge of the cultivated plain, about twelve miles north of Gaza, we arrive at Ashkelon, the second Philistine city, close to the shore, and still bearing the name of Askulan. Gardens and vineyards fringe the old crusading walls landward, but the sand is rapidly encroaching on them and drifting up to the foot of the ancient fortifications on the south. There is a large village, El Jurah, to the north, but the site of Ashkelon itself is absolutely without inhabitant. "Ashkelon shall be a desolation" (Zeph. 2:4). "Ashkelon shall not be inhabited" (Zech. 9:5). *Tristram.*

1-15. In these verses the prophet adds fresh motives for repentance. He unfolds the punishment that was hanging over the enemies of Israel on the west (4-7), on the east (8-11), on the south (12), and on the north (13-15). If the calamities inflicted upon Israel by their enemies did not bring them back to God, what must their end be ? (Cf. Amos 1, 2.) If the heathen were punished for their transgressions, what did the people of God deserve (3; 6, 7) ? B. C.

5-7. Every epithet in this fifth verse is selected with a view of deepening the gloom of its terrible denunciation with veiled suggestions of a judgment beyond the power of words to express. And yet, mark once more how moods of mercy struggle up against the tide of his burning indignation ; how the tender tones of compassion blend with and soar above the tones of judgment. What soft pastoral images break upon us in verse 6 ! This once fertile tract by the sea, thickly dotted with the crowded hives of human industry, with fair cities inhabited by free brave men, afterward a desert accursed by God and abandoned by man, "*shall become pastures, with huts for shepherds and folds for sheep.*" Through the mountain gorges the flocks of the restored Hebrews will descend on the green flowery plains, knowing no want, fearing no evil, because the shepherds go before them with staff and rod. And how the suggestions of peace and hope breathed by this verse are confirmed by the next (verse 7) ! As yet, indeed, we hear of no mercy for the Philistines ; but we do hear, amid the thunders of judgment, a voice which speaks comfortably to Israel. A remnant of Judah is to be saved, and to possess the gates of its enemies. This note of mercy toward Judah we shall hear again and again, amid the angry discords of the doom which destroys their enemies, until, at last, it swells into a song of mercy for all races, even for those who have been most hardy in their defiance of heaven. *Cor.*

8-10. The parallel prophecies against Moab are Num. 24:17; Isa. 15, 16; Amos 2:1-3; Jer. 48; against Ammon, Amos 1:13-15; Jer. 49; Ezek. 25:1-7. Moab and Ammon had the same origin. They had the same hostility to the people of God. They would suffer the same punishment. The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah was a type of utter destruction (De. 29:23; Isa. 1:9; 13:19). The Moabites and Ammonites were descended from him who had been rescued by God's mercy, and lived near the scene that should constantly have reminded them alike of God's *severity and goodness* ; but the warning was unheeded. B. C.

9, 10. Just as the elect people are to find pastures in the tract by the sea, "with huts for shepherds and folds for sheep," to feed on the substance of the Philistines, and to lie down in the deserted houses of Ashkelon ; so also they are to grow rich on the spoils of Moab and Ammon, and to reduce even these inveterate and insolent foes to bondage. There is a promise in this doom, then, a promise bright with hope

for as many of the Hebrews as were loyal to their Divine King. But does God care only for Hebrews? Is the whole world to be sacrificed to them? "Have we not all one Father," whatever our race or blood? and must not the universal Father have mercy and grace for all? So far from sacrificing the whole world to the Hebrews, when they finally refused to be the ministers and prophets of His saving truth to all the families of the earth, He sacrificed *them* to the good of the world. If they were chosen, it was that they might serve, that they might be a blessing to the human race; if they are cast away, it is because they were perverting the blessing that was in them to a curse. Terrible as are the judgments he denounces on heathen empires, Zephaniah reserves his heaviest doom for the elect race; "judgment begins at the house of God;" and whether he denounce judgment on heathen or Hebrew, he is sure that judgment is mercy, and the precursor of mercy—that it is but as the knife which wounds that it may heal. *Con.*

**II.** The course of thought here should be noted. God becomes terrible to idolatrous nations when He furnishes—*i.e.*, wastes away and destroys their gods; for when a nation's gods are gone, what have they more? On the other hand, and as a result of destroying both the idol gods of those nations and their incorrigible worshippers as well, men everywhere, over all the isles of the Gentiles, shall worship the true God. *II. C.*

The immense value of this verse consists in the fact that it reveals a law, a constant and invariable law, of the Divine government. The verse stands alone, and is complete in itself. It is, so to speak, a place of vantage, a point of rest, to which the prophet has risen, and from which he contemplates not simply the dooms of which he had spoken, or the dooms of which he is about to speak, but the whole course of the Divine Providence. And as he looks before and after, as he recalls the past and projects himself into the future, he finds *this* to be a law of human history, that the judgments of God are a necessary part of the scheme of redemption; that God intends them to recover men from error to truth, from sin to holiness. They answer to the convulsions and storms of the natural world, and serve to disperse the foul infections which brood over the homes of men, to raise them to happier conditions, and to pour round them a more vital air. God *is* terrible, he says, but terrible only that He may be merciful. He furnishes the false gods, whose service is bondage, starves them out of the

world, that men may freely worship the only wise and true God. For the moment, at least, the Hebrew seer rises far above all local or national prejudices, and proclaims a blessing which belongs not to the Jew only, but to all the world. This is the law of the Divine method, of the way God takes with men. And the great comfort, the great value of it is, that it *is* a law, that God will act on it whatever men do or forbear to do. That there is a pure, Divine, Almighty will penetrating and pervading the whole course of the human story, working in and through all men toward a foreseen end of mercy, an end which comprises the salvation of mankind—this is a solid ground on which to build our hopes, whether for ourselves or for the world. And it surely is very striking that this law should be stated *here*, that this light of life should arise in a darkness so profound; that, amid the harsh thunders of a doom launched against all the empires of the ancient world, we should hear a harmony so clear and sweet and full that it makes all discords tributary to itself; that even as the storm of judgment goes crashing round the whole horizon we should see, even for a moment, the gracious bow of hope shining in peaceful splendor across the darkened sky, making the very lightnings look dull and coarse before a beauty so pure, so supreme.

**13-15.** Assyria, although so strong and so proud in its strength, is to be utterly laid waste. The mistress of the world, the most populous, warlike, ambitious and cultivated of Eastern races, is to be exterminated. And Nineveh, its wonderful capital, so massively built, so splendidly and curiously adorned, so secure in its impregnable defences, is to become an arid and barren waste, over which men will pass without so much as dreaming of the ruins and treasures that lie beneath their feet. So complete was the destruction, that, with a startling abruptness, the great city vanished from the face of the earth, and its very ruins were hidden from the eyes of men. Only two centuries afterward, Xenophon, in the famous retreat of the ten thousand, passed over its site without so much as learning its name, though he heard some dim tradition of its former greatness and its fate. And till fifty years ago it remained buried in oblivion, as in sand. It was not till the year 1842 that Layard, Rawlinson and Botta dug into these mounds and exhumed and interpreted the remains which tell the story of the city's ancient greatness and luxury and culture with a power beyond that of words. This doom, then, the doom on Assyria, was

speedily and literally fulfilled. But, surely, a larger fulfilment awaits it. For in Nineveh, as in other ancient empires, the Hebrew prophets saw the representative for the time then present of all the great world-powers which exalt themselves against God. Till the kingdoms of this world rise and merge into the kingdom of our God and of His Christ, the triumph of these ancient prophecies, their final and victorious fulfilment, will not have come. *Cor.*

**15.** The final downfall of Nineveh is wonderfully foreshadowed in Nahum 3, where he compares it to the capture of Thebes, indicating the action of fire, which all the Ninevite remains so illustrate. Even more distinct as to a final desolation is Zeph. 2 : 15 : "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me ; how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in ! every one that passeth by her shall hiss and wag his hand." The dreary solitude of the mounds from which such precious treasures have been dug could not have been more terribly expressed. Yet the words of Nahum were written about B.C. 631, when the reign of Assurbanipal was at its zenith ; and those of Zephaniah, who is generally placed some thirty years later, could not possibly be suggested by any long continued overthrow. *Cairns.*

**Chap. 3.** This chapter opens with further statements of the guilt and doom of Jerusalem (verses 1-4) ; of God's justice in her punishment (verse 5) ; of His judgments on other nations (verses 6-8) ; then turning to words of mercy, the Lord promises to convert the nations (verses 9, 10), and to restore and bless most abundantly the remnant of His people (verses 11-20). *H. C.*

**1, 2.** The appeal opens with a brief denunciation of "woe," which contains three epithets that Jerusalem should have been the last city in the world to deserve. Chosen of God to be His people, "a holy people, zealous of good works," instead of doing His will, its inhabitants straitened and hardened themselves against Him ; instead of being a holy people, they were stained with the foulest vices ; instead of loving and serving one another, they oppressed and devoured each other. Jerusalem is a *rebellious city, a polluted city, an oppressing city.*

These epithets are explained and vindicated in verse 2. "She hath not hearkened to the voice" of God, as uttered in the law of Moses, and in the remonstrances and appeals of the prophets. "She accepts no chastisement," so that even the infinite patience of Jehovah is ex-

hausted, and He is weary of correcting her in vain. And as law and punishment have failed of their proper effect, so also have promise and invitation. She has no faith in the gracious offers of Divine mercy, does not "trust" them nor Him who makes them, nor suffer them to "draw" her "near to her God." *Cor.*

**3, 4.** If the city were such as the prophet represents, the guilt lay chiefly with those whose rank and office gave them influence : *princes, judges, prophets and priests.*

**5.** *Morning by morning doth He bring His judgment to light.* As each morning the rising sun sheds light upon the world, so each morning, day by day, there were clear proofs to all who would see that they had among them a righteous Governor, rewarding the good and punishing the wicked. *B. C.*

**7.** What aggravated their guilt till it became intolerable, and put them beyond all mercy save the "mercy of judgment," was that God had given them a pure law of life, and Himself administered it among them ; that, in the destruction inflicted on neighboring kingdoms, He had constantly warned them of the inevitable results of violating that law ; and that He had not spared to correct *them* so often as they went astray, and to plead with them, and to urge them to repentance and obedience. They had seen race after race cut off, the battlements of their fortified places laid waste, their cities battered down, their streets reduced to such ruinous desolation that no man dwelt in them, no man so much as passed through them. And what were these Divine judgments but the law of God "writ large" and illustrated on a scale so vast and impressive as to arrest the attention of the most heedless, and to rouse a saving fear in the stubborn and impenitent ? But even these glaring and portentous illustrations of the wrath of God against evil, and all who cleave to it, had been wasted on the stiff-necked nation. They had stood under these shocks and alarms unmoved, or moved only for the moment. And now what was there, short of a judgment more severe than any they had ever yet seen or known, that could constrain them to penitence, and through penitence to righteousness, through righteousness to peace ? *Cor.*

They were not won upon by gentle methods, nor had severe ones any effect, for they rose early and corrupted all their doings ; they were more resolute and eager in their wicked courses than ever ; more studious and solicitous in making provision for their lusts, and let slip no opportunity for the gratification of them.

God rose up early, to send them His prophets, to reduce and reclaim them; but they were up before Him, to shut and bolt the door against them. Their wickedness was universal; all their doings were corrupted, and it was all owing to themselves, they could not lay the blame upon the tempter, but they alone must bear it; they themselves wilfully and designedly corrupted all their doings. II.

8-20. The rest of the prophecy divides naturally into four parts, of which one (verses 8-10) contains reasons for hope and patience; two (verses 11-13), a description of Israel when restored; three (verses 14-17), a song of triumph; four (verses 18-20), a renewed assurance of restoration.

8. The words can only apply to *the meek of the land* (2:3), the remnant that God would spare, with which the future welfare of the nation was bound up. Therefore, because God would surely execute judgment upon the guilty, let the pious wait upon Him, patiently, trustfully, for He had good things in store for them; the punishment of the nations, of which mention is made immediately, should be followed not only by their admission to the knowledge and worship of God, but by the restoration of Israel.

9. The fruit of this *pure lip* is the sincere worship of God. Such is the meaning of the phrase to *call upon the name of the Lord*. Here public worship is referred to, as is shown by what follows. *To serve Him with one consent*. In the Hebrew it is *with one shoulder*, as of men helping one another to support a heavy load. So, steadily, strenuously. B. C.

Instead of saying that men will be raised to a purer and more spiritual use of language, he represents Jehovah as saying, "I will turn to the nations a *pure lip*," a cleansed and sinless lip, in order "that" in place of defiling themselves with invocations addressed to false gods, and with the foul strains sung in their honor, "they may all invoke the name of Jehovah." Instead of saying that men will be happily united in their service of Heaven, he represents Jehovah as predicting that, when men speak with purified lips, they will "serve Him with one shoulder"—that is, they will walk with *even* shoulders under the yoke and burden of His law, walk in unity, in a happy consent of obedience, each bearing his full share of the load, each keeping step with the rest, and thus making the burden unburdensome to any. Now, speech is the flower, as deeds are the fruit, of the soul. Our words indicate character, as the blossom the tree. If these are pure, we are

pure; if these are impure, we are impure. Hence it is that the Scriptures lay so heavy a stress on the use of the tongue. To have a pure lip is to have a pure soul. And the judgments of God come on men to make them pure—pure within, that they may be pure in all that expresses their inward nature. The terrors of the Lord reach their end only as they purge the lips of men, and constrain them to show forth His praise and "worthily magnify His holy name." Cor.

Religion is our "reasonable service." It involves the consent of all our powers; the mind embracing divinely discovered truth, the conscience recognizing a supreme obligation, the heart yielding to gracious heavenly influence, and the will bowing to that higher will which is "holy and just and good." White.

As the denunciation of judgment melts into the call to repentance, so the call to repentance melts into the promise of good. In chap. 3:8 the prophet invites the faithful to "wait" for the day of judgment in an attitude of hope; and in verse 9 and the verses which follow it he gives them ground and reasons for hope: the day of judgment is to bring in the year of redemption; the fire, which is to destroy, is also to renew the world. Hitherto, the thought of the Divine judgment and its terrors has been uppermost in his mind; now he sees judgment issuing in mercy, mercy rejoicing over judgment. The storm is over and gone; the air is soft and clear, the bow of hope shines with tender hallowing radiance on the clouds, the earth breathes her sweetest fragrance, and the birds fill the air with notes of joy and praise. Cor.

10. The reader will readily recall the case of an "cunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of Ethiopia, who came to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 8:27 ff.), and who went home with more of the Gospel than he had ever known before. The case proves that there were some dispersed people there, probably Jews, who remembered Zion, and that a purer knowledge of God went among them after the Christian era. It would seem that there have been nominal Christians in Abyssinia ever since. They were found there by Bruce in his travels, early in the present century.

12. The few spared and surviving, after the many had fallen under sore judgments, are blessed by what they have suffered, and by what they have seen others suffer; and these return to the Lord their God. Of this promise there have been many fulfillments. H. C.

14-17. The prophet bids Zion *rejoice* and *sing* in prospect of future happiness. Trials

and calamities were before her citizens, but they might be armed with patience; nay, *rejoice in tribulation*, because their sufferings, however severe, would surely be followed by such consolations and joys as they had never yet known. The grounds of rejoicing are three: The removal of chastisement and the sure tokens of the presence of the Great King among them. Their perfect safety. The manifestation of God's almighty power and tender love. B. C.

While he thus depicts the happy estate of the restored Zion, which he throughout regards as the centre and throne of a redeemed world, Zephaniah breaks into a rapture, a prophetic ecstasy (verses 14-17). Addressing himself to the impersonated Israel, he piles word on word, epithet on epithet, image on image, like one in a transport beyond the power of language to express. He sees God "removing the judgments" and "clearing away the enemies" of the New Jerusalem, preparing it for the habitation of His redeemed, sweeping out every trace of disorder, whatsoever defileth or loveth a lie, shedding light through the windows that have so long been darkened with cloud and storm. The city and temple being restored and cleansed, he sees Jehovah, the King of Israel, once more seated on the throne, revealing Himself no longer as "a fire involved in a cloud," as a judicial purifying energy wrapped in mystery and terror, but as a gracious familiar Presence, redeeming men from all evil, infusing into them a saving health, rejoicing over them with sacred rapture. As he gazes into this bright future, the prophet discerns that God is so manifestly and graciously in the midst of His people that the nations who have brought back His dispersed ones behold His presence from afar, and cry:

"Fear not, O Zion! Let not Thy hands drop down!  
Jehovah, Thy God, is in thy midst,  
The Mighty One who saves.  
*He rejoiceth over thee with rapture;*  
*He is silent in His love;*  
*He exulteth over thee, with cries of joy."*

There are no bolder words in Scripture, and few that are more sublime in their simplicity. Not only does the prophet, with the fearless audacity of perfect trust, attribute to God Himself the rapture under which his own heart reels and faints; not only is he sure that all human love is but a pale reflection of the love of God; he even ventures to take two of the commonest forms in which human love expresses itself when it mounts toward ecstasy, and to transfer these to the Almighty. As man in the rapture of his

passion is at times dumb, finding no words that will even shadow forth his emotion, and at other times vents his unwordable rapture in vague inarticulate sounds and cries; so Zephaniah conceives of God as kindling into a rapture of love over His redeemed, which can find no utterance—"He is *silent in His love*," or which can only express itself in vague unsyllabled outcries: "He exulteth over thee *with cries of joy*." The Eternal Lover of men Zephaniah portrays as exulting over men with an ecstasy like that of the bridegroom rejoicing in the beauty and tenderness of his bride; even as the Lord Jesus portrays Him as like a father who runs to meet his returning son while yet he is a great way off, and falls on his neck and kisses him. *Cæ.*

**17. *He will save.*** You believe the Lord's might; He is able to save; His word declares this, and His work proves His willingness; exercise your faith upon His will to save you both from all your fears and all your foes; cast your all upon the *will of Jesus*; for:

*He will rejoice over thee with joy.* It was His joy to bleed and die in agony and blood for thee; it is His joy that thou comest and criest to Him as a lost sinner for salvation; He will rejoice in His work for thee, His grace in thee, and His salvation of thee. Oh, well mayest thou be called on, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again, I say, rejoice." *W. Mason.*

**Rest in His love.** If He is at all, He is tenderness itself. If He is at all, never did sire so yearn over son as God yearns over all His creatures. . . . The nature which God has given man is the noblest style of nature known. It is even the noblest conceivable. It is a moral nature; capable of knowing, admiring, loving, freely choosing, and magnificently possessing and enjoying God and virtue in apparently ever-increasing degrees. No other nature is capable of so high an order of enjoyment as this. No other can glorify the Maker so much. The intelligent appreciation and voluntary homage of such a being must be the most precious and dear thing on which the Eternal Father looks down. *Burr.*

O the pure delights between God and glorified souls! God looks on them with an engaged eye, as His own by many dear titles, and is ravished with the reflex of His own excellencies shining in them. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride (it is the language of Divine love), so their God rejoices over them. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He



will rejoice over thee with singing." He is infinitely delighted in the communication of His goodness to them. And what a blessed rest do they find in the complete fruition of His goodness! All their desires quietly expire in His bosom. What triumphs of joy follow! Can we frame a fuller conception of happiness than to be perfectly loved by the best and most blessed being, and perfectly to love Him, and to partake of the richest emanations of His *loving-kindness, that is far more valuable and desirable than life itself?* Bates.

**18-20.** The joys of which the prophet speaks were distant. He does not forget the present sorrows of Israel, or the sufferings they had yet to bear, before they could raise the shout of triumph. He has words of comfort specially adapted to cheer the hearts of those who mourned in Zion. It is God Himself who now speaks (verse 20) to the *sorrowful*, assuring them that He knows their sorrows, that He will deliver and restore them, take away their reproach, and make them famous. B. C.

**18.** The sentiment is that God will gather home to Zion those dispersed ones who had been sad because of their long exclusion from her solemn feasts, and who had borne reproach for their God.

**19, 20.** God will reverse the state of her long-depressed and scattered people. The feeble shall be saved with strength; the exiled brought home in triumph; the long-dishonored and disowned shall have praise and fame in the very place where they had been put to shame. The public sentiment of the world is changed, and the real friends of God are now held, not in contempt, but in honor. It can scarcely be supposed that the restoration from Babylon exhausted the significance of these promises. Then the restored people were few and feeble. Though honored and favored by Cyrus, yet they were by no means greatly honored by their nearest neighbors, the Samaritans, nor by other contiguous nations. Something more and better than that must lie yet treasured up for Zion in these promises. Yet further, the clear indications in this chapter (verses 9, 10) of the conversion of the Gentiles also must carry the great body of these predictions over into the Gospel era, and some portion of them down into those times described by Paul (Rom. 11), when, almost simultaneously, the Jews will be grafted back into their former stock, and the Gentile world be converted to the same ever blessed God. O come, that glorious day! H. C.

## PROPHECY OF HAGGAI.

### HAGGAI, INTRODUCTION; CHAPTERS I., II.

**1:1** In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,  
**2** Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, It is not the time for us to come,  
**3** the time for the Lord's house to be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the  
**4** prophet, saying, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your cieled houses, while this  
**5** house lieth waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways.  
**6** Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye  
are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages  
**7** earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your  
**8** ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take plea-  
**9** sure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to  
little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts.  
**10** Because of mine house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house. There-  
fore for your sake the heaven is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.  
**11** And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and

upon the wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands.

- 12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him ; and the people did fear before the LORD. Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, 13 saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people ; and they came and did work in 14 the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

- 2 : 1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of 2 the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant 3 of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory ? and 4 how do ye see it now ? is it not in your eyes as nothing ? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD ; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest ; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work : for I am with you, saith the LORD of 5 hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my 6 spirit abode among you : fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD of hosts : Yet once, it is a 7 little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ; and I will shake all nations, and the desirable things of all nations shall come, and I will fill this 8 house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith 9 the LORD of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the LORD of hosts : and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

- 10 In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the 11 word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Ask now 12 the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it become holy ? 13 And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean ? And the priests answered and said, It shall 14 be unclean. Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD ; and so is every work of their hands ; and that which they offer there is 15 unclean. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone 16 was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD : through all that time, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten ; when one came to the winefat for to draw 17 out fifty vessels, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the work of your hands ; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. Consider, I pray you, from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, 18 since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn ? yea, the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree hath not brought forth : from this day will I bless you.

- 20 And the word of the LORD came the second time unto Haggai in the four and twentieth 21 day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the 22 heavens and the earth : and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations ; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them ; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of 23 his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet : for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

#### Introduction.

HAGGAI or Hag'gai, the tenth in order of the minor prophets, and first of those who prophesied after the Captivity. With regard to his tribe and parentage, both history and

tradition are alike silent. Probably he was one of the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua. The rebuilding of the temple, commenced in the reign of Cyrus (B.C. 535), was suspended during the reigns of his successors, Cambyzes and Pseudo-Smerdis, in

consequence of the determined hostility of the Samaritans. On the accession of Darius Hystaspes (B.C. 521), the prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the renewal of the undertaking, and obtained the permission and assistance of the King (Ezra 5 : 1 ; 6 : 14). Animated by the high courage of these devoted men, the people prosecuted the work with vigor, and the temple was completed and dedicated in the sixth year of Darius (B.C. 516). According to tradition, Haggai was born in Babylon, was a young man when he came to Jerusalem, and was buried with honor near the sepulchres of the priests. It has hence been conjectured that he was a priest. *Dir. B.*

Cyrus, on his accession to the Medo-Persian throne, two years after it had absorbed the Chaldean empire and made Babylon its capital, issued an edict, strongly inviting the Jews to return to their own land, and rebuild both their holy city and their temple. Fifty thousand responded to this call, and under Zerubbabel as governor, and Joshua as high priest, returned to the land of their fathers, and commenced rebuilding the city, and in process of time the temple also. The Book of Ezra gives the Jewish history of these events. It there appears that in the second year of Cyrus (B.C. 535), and in the second month, they began to rebuild the temple ; that soon the Samaritans began to oppose and retard their work, and kept up this opposition during the remaining five years of the reign of Cyrus (Ezra 4 : 5), and yet more vigorously and successfully, under his vile son and successor Cambyses (called, Ezra 4 : 6, "Alasuerus"), who reigned seven years and five months. At length, from his successor, Smerdis (called, Ezra 4 : 7, 8, 11, 23, Artaxerxes), they obtained an order that the work should absolutely cease. This Smerdis reigned but seven months. A better king succeeded, in the person of Darius Hystaspes. As Smerdis was at best only an usurper, and as the decree of Cyrus was therefore still the law of the realm, there was no legal obstacle in the way of resuming this work the first moment after the pressure of violent prevention was removed. When, throughout the first year of Darius, it was seen that the people did not resume this work, but occupied themselves in fitting up and even embellishing their own houses, the Lord sent His prophet Haggai, and two months later Zechariah, to rebuke them for this neglect, and to encourage them to resume and complete the building of the temple. The work was completed in the sixth year of Darius (Ezra 6 : 15). These are briefly the his-

toric facts which, being intimately connected with the subject-matter of this book, are essential to its intelligent exposition. II. C.— — *Read carefully the history, v. vii., pp. 501-6. B.*

Haggai stands next on the prophetic roll to Zephaniah ; but between these two prophets there is a wide interval of time, at least a century ; and this interval was marked by events so momentous and tragic as to change the whole face of the goodly land and to effect a corresponding change on the character, conditions and prospects of its inhabitants. The Captivity had intervened, and the Return. The land had been invaded, depopulated, reduced to a jungle haunted by wild beasts. The cities had been broken down and burned with fire ; the very temple had become a charred and blackened heap of ruins. Zephaniah had foretold the judgment which was to sweep through the land, and to sweep away not only man and beast from it, but their offences with the sinners, in terms so sombre and terrible as that they still make our hearts tremble when we read them ; and his prediction had been utterly fulfilled. No greater, or apparently more irreparable calamity could well have fallen on a nation than that which fell on Judea. Not only was a large majority of the men capable of bearing arms cut off ; not only were the statesmen, priests, farmers, merchants, and even the skilled artisans and the able-bodied peasants and laborers carried away captive, so that the land was left well-nigh without inhabitant ; but its central and most fertile valley was given to an idolatrous and half-barbarous horde of aliens, who were unable to recover the soil from the tropical jungle which had sprung up over it, or so much as to keep the lions that haunted it at bay.

Nevertheless the purpose of God stood fast. His purpose to redeem His people, and to restore them to the land of their fathers. During the seventy years of the Captivity He kept their hopes alive by the ministry of the great prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, assuring them that, if they should confess their sins and return to Him, He would deliver them from their bondage, lead them back in triumph to the country and the city in which He had dwelt among them as a king among his subjects, and raise them to a height of welfare and privilege such as they had never reached before. As the term of the Captivity drew to an end, the voice of prophecy grew more clear and bright ; and at last the promise was fulfilled or began to be fulfilled. Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, the conqueror

of Babylon, whom God had chosen to be His servant and "the shepherd" of His people, issued an edict, authorizing as many as were so minded to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the house of the Lord God of Israel. Some fifty thousand of the captives, led by Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, and by Joshua, a priest of the house of Aaron, came back to their abandoned city and ravaged land; and among these returning exiles there was probably a young man named Haggai, and another named Zechariah, who were soon to receive the prophetic inspiration, as they may already have received a prophetic training from the seers of the Exile.

The merit of Haggai does not lie in his style, but in the clear perception he had of the principles on which God rules men and their affairs; in his conviction that only as men maintain a sincere communion with Him, and render Him a frank obedience, can they reach their true blessedness; and in the zeal with which he devoted himself to the task of implanting these convictions in the breasts of his fellows. His value to us lies not in the finished beauty of his verse, but in the example he has left us, and in the light he pours on an obscure period of the Hebrew story. We know little of the life of the exiles for the first twenty years after their return to the land of their fathers, of the thoughts that were habitual to them, of the motives by which they were inspired. Even if we read the first six chapters of the Book of Ezra, which covers the history of this period, we learn comparatively little of what was most inward and peculiar to the men of the time. But as we study Haggai and Zechariah, we see this very period from the inside rather than from without, and learn what we most need to know of the moral conditions of the time, of how the world and human life shaped themselves to the men of that day, and how the will of God worked out through their weak and erring wills to ends of mercy that comprehend the welfare of mankind at large. This is Haggai's "glory"—not that he was a great poet, but that he was emphatically a good man, with a steadfast faith in the Divine laws when they seemed incredible, a keen sense of their application to the wants and conditions of his time, and that he was possessed by a burning zeal for the house and honor of God. *Con.*

The recorded prophetic action of Haggai occurred in the second year (B.C. 520) of Darius, son of Hystaspes, who must be clearly distinguished from Darius Nothus, whose reign fell

a whole century later. Some sixteen years before the return from Exile had taken place (B.C. 536), and, according to the traditional interpretation of the difficult narrative found in the Book of Ezra, the foundation of the new temple was laid early in the following year. Little progress was made with the building ere the work had to be abandoned, owing to the intrigues of jealous neighbors at the imperial court. An altar had, indeed, been at once inaugurated and the routine of sacrificial worship established, but the temple edifice was left untouched during the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, and the usurper Pseudo-Smerdis. The position of things was profoundly dangerous and discreditable to the newly founded community at Jerusalem. At this critical point in the history of the restored community the prophet Haggai appeared on the scene, and to him, in concert with Zechariah (Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14), belongs the credit of having recalled Israel to the path of duty and the ministry of revelation. The message of Haggai is directed to one definite purpose from beginning to end: to rouse the people to resume the erection of the sanctuary, to keep them steadfast to the work against every possible discouragement and to inspire them with an animating faith in the inner grandeur of the material undertaking on which they were engaged.

The Book of Haggai consists of three prophetic appearances, falling respectively in the sixth, seventh and ninth months of the second year of Darius. The prophet pillories the people's acquiescent procrastination of the duty of rearing and finishing the temple, while they themselves (1 Chron. 17:1) dwell in well-panelled houses. He seizes on that very element in their condition which had been their chief excuse for delay, the poorness of the material progress already made, and turns it into a stimulus to energetic action. Boldly he declares that a blight and canker of dissatisfaction must rest on all they do, so long as the central element of moral and material prosperity is neglected, and with promises of happier days and more rewardful industry, he urges them to concentrate the whole energies and resources of the community on 'the restoration of the temple (1:1-11). The appeal pierces the conscience and convinces the judgment of the little colony. The prophet assures them that in their new obedience to the Divine will they shall have the presence with them and the success of Jehovah, and twenty-four days later operations are commenced on the temple ruins (1:12-15). Before a month had elapsed a moral

danger menaced the undertaking. With natural retrospective partiality, with no ill intentions, but with the most disheartening effects on the workers, the old people, who remembered the splendor of the former temple (Ezra 3 : 12, 13), indulged in disparaging comparisons between its magnificence and the poverty of its successor, doubted whether the future could retrieve the vanished past and questioned if Israel's forfeited birthright were not lost beyond recall. Energetically the prophet intervenes, protests against such faithlessness in the Divine presence and tenacity of purpose, declares that God's promises may linger on the way, but cannot lapse on account of man's unfaithfulness, and in view of Jehovah's power, the changes of providence, and the certainty of Heaven's resolves, predicts, with ringing certainty of assurance, that the future glory of the temple shall outshine all the wonders of the past in the peace and perfect fruition of God's accomplished purposes (2 : 1-9).

Two months later a fresh intervention took place. Apparently doubts were expressed in some quarters, if the completion of the temple would bring the desired and promised prosperity, which the erection of the altar and performance of religious rites had failed to secure. Haggai, by an illustration derived from the rules of ceremonial holiness and defilement, shows the people that all their previous endeavors were contaminated and robbed of blessing by the guilt of their neglect of their central and supreme obligation, and, assuring them that the impotence of partial surrender to God's will must not be made the measure of the possibilities of complete consecration, promises them the progress and well being that had been hitherto lacking (2 : 10-19). Then, turning to the head and representative of the small and unassuming theocracy, which yet held within it the promise and potency of Heaven's best gift to men, the prophet foretells the downfall and overthrow of all worldly powers and authorities, and through the Divine favor, fidelity and unchanging purpose of redemption, predicts the ultimate supremacy of God's chosen servant and minister on earth (2 : 20-23). *Elastic.*

**Chap. 1.** An appeal to the Israelites to take up in earnest the work of restoring the temple of Jehovah, which work had been intermitted for some years, not for want of means (for they had built sumptuous residences for themselves), but because of the opposition they had met with, and their own want of zeal and energy in the service of Jehovah. This neglect, as

Haggai reminds them, had been followed by calamities indicative of the Divine displeasure. The successful issue of his appeal is recorded in Ezra 5 : 1, 2. B. C.

The Lord rebukes the neglect of the people to build His house ; calls their attention to their lean and meagre harvests, and to His blighting curses upon their land and labor because of this neglect ; and when the people shall have returned to this duty, pledges them His favoring presence H. C.

**1.** *Darius the king.* This can be no other than Darius, the son of Hyastaspes, whose second year was B. C. 520, so that when Haggai began to prophesy eighteen years had elapsed since the exiles had come back from Babylon under Zerubbabel ; and sixteen years had passed since the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid. (See Ezra 3 8-11.) The external sources of opposition, which led to the intermission of the work begun under the auspices of Cyrus, are detailed in the fourth chapter of Ezra ; but there were other causes in the temper of the Jews themselves tending to the same result. From the very first there had been despondency (Ezra 3 : 12), as well as a spirit of procrastination and self-indulgence (infr. verses 2, 4). *Darius the king* is the expression which a contemporary would naturally use. The compiler of the Book of Ezra, writing at a later period, calls him *Darius, king of Persia* (Ezra 4 : 5, 24). B. C.

**1, 2.** The people excused their delay in finishing the temple, on the alleged ground that the time for it had not yet come. It has been supposed that they bolstered up this lame apology by their own construction of Jeremiah's prophecy (25 : 12), which had named seventy years as the duration of the Captivity. As the temple was not destroyed until eighteen years after the first captives were taken away, and as only about fifteen years had passed, up to the first year of Darius, since the first captives returned, they perhaps persuaded themselves to think that the temple must lie desolate yet some three years longer, to complete its full period of seventy years. Men sometimes put constructions upon Scripture which God has neither put nor authorized, the ultimate cause being that they are but too well pleased to have it so. This may have been a case of the same sort. H. C.

**3.** *This people.* Not *My people*, because by their neglect of God's house they had forfeited their title to that name of privilege. B. C.

**4.** By this single ironical question, therefore, the prophet cuts away from them the ground

on which they stood. They could not honestly plead that the times were too hard to allow them to build a house for God while they were erecting sumptuous houses, inlaid with cedar, for themselves. *Cor.*

**5, 6.** The expressive form of the original is, "Set your heart on your ways"—*i.e.*, look on your ways, not only thoughtfully, but solemnly, appreciating and realizing the significance of your course toward God, and of God's toward you. Since they had dishonored God by neglecting His temple, He had scourged them by suspending His usual gifts of timely rain and sun. He appeals to them to note the facts of their own case, how they had prospered in nothing, and had toiled to small purpose. *H. C.*

**6-11.** The prophet now teaches them that the calamities under which they groaned were Divine judgments—not the results whether of the niggardliness of nature or the hostility of man; teaches them, too, that they can make no more fatal mistake than to wait for more prosperous times before they build, since they will never rise to prosperity until they have built a house for God, in which He may dwell among them. Starting with his favorite formula, "Set your heart upon your ways"—a formula which indicates a certain habitual thoughtfulness on the part of the prophet, and a thoughtfulness mainly bent on the laws of human life and conduct—he graphically depicts the misery of the time, its unsatisfied longings, its habitual dejection (verse 6). It would be hard to find words that more graphically set forth a time in which men got little by their toils, and had no heart to enjoy what little they got. In such a time they might well fling up their hands in despair, and cry, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit!" Instead of inciting them to despair, however, Haggai discloses the meaning and secret of their misery, and shows them the true remedy for it. Repeating his favorite formula, he once more summons them to a thoughtful review of their ways. If they ponder these things in their heart, they will discover *why* He has thus visited them; that it is because, while they could run with cheerful alacrity to get their own houses built or adorned, they had been content to let His house lie waste. If they have any doubt that this is the true cause of their broken and defeated hopes, let them put it to the proof. Let them prepare to build. Let them go up to the mountain—*i.e.*, Lebanon, with its cedars—and fetch wood. Let them complete the temple, and then see whether God will not take pleas-

ure in dwelling in it, and glorify Himself in their midst (verses 7-11). *Cor.*

The three causes which are apt to hinder our faithful zeal in building for the Lord—selfish sloth, unbelieving despondency and carnal security—are they not the bane also of our own spiritual life? The Lord will not. He cannot, bless us personally while we yield to these temptations to slackness in the business in which He would engage us—the business of seeking out from amid the world's ruins stones for His living temple, doing what in us lies to build up Christ's spiritual house, to win souls to Him, to feed His sheep and His lambs, helping them to abide in Him. *R. S. Cundlish.*

**12-15.** It is pleasant to note that these messages from the Lord produced the desired result. The Lord stirred up the spirit of both rulers and people, and they took hold earnestly of the neglected work of rebuilding the temple. Twenty-four days sufficed to arouse them and to make the necessary preparations. The masses of the people were far more obedient to the voice of God than before the Captivity—furnishing yet another case of blessings coming through sore chastisement. *H. C.*

And as they began, the prophet brought them a new message from Jehovah—a message all the more impressive for its brevity (verse 13): "*I am with you, saith the Lord.*" According to the Hebrew conception, God was only with them when they had erected a palace for Him; but, for their encouragement, and that the joy of the Lord may be their strength, He announces Himself as already present, though some four years must elapse before His habitation will be complete. He will be with them while they build, that they may not fear what men can do against them—with them, to bless them when they labor for themselves as well as when they build for Him; so that the heaven shall no longer withhold its dew, nor the earth its fruit; but when they look for little, they shall behold much, and, instead of creeping about with dejected and hopeless hearts, they shall eat their bread with gladness, praising their God and King. *Cor.*

**Chap. 2: 1-9.** Conveys a message of encouragement, and a promise calculated to remove the natural despondency with which the Israelites regarded the meanness of their work, comparing it with what they had learned by the testimony of their forefathers as to the magnificence of Solomon's Temple. The prophet announces, as from God, an approaching time, when the latter glory of the temple shall be greater than the former; and when the present

hostility of the surrounding nations shall be succeeded by security and peace. B. C.

**2, 3.** A few patriarchs of venerable age remained to remember the glory of that first temple which had now lain desolate about sixty-eight years. The Lord calls their attention to the contrast between that and this. "How do ye see this now? Is not this in your eyes, compared with that, as nothing?" Ezra 3: 12, 13 gives us a touching allusion to this scene, blending the joy of the young people with the grief of their fathers—the shoutings of the one class and the sad wailings of the other—each swelling up, and perhaps each exciting the other, until the noise was heard afar, and men could not distinguish the shouts of joy from the outcries of grief—a scene not soon forgotten by either the joyous or the sad ones of that day. The Lord calls attention to the wide contrast between this latter house and the former because He had something to say about it. H. C.

**3-5.** To strengthen them against every depressing influence, to inspirit them to "work" on in faith and hope, he repeats the Divine assurance with which the previous chapter closes, "*For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts*"—i.e., "*I am for you, although the Persians and the Samaritans and even the ancient men of Israel may be against you.*" And this assurance He confirms with an argument which they could bring to the test of experience. The word, or "covenant" of God, and the "Spirit" of God remained with them. They might suppose that this covenant had ceased and determined when they had so flagrantly violated it, as that God had given them a prey to their enemies and suffered them to be carried away captive to Babylon; but it had not ceased despite their sins; it still stood. God would be even better to them than His word; and here was a proof patent to them all—the Spirit, which alone gives life to the word, was still with them and manifestly with them. That Spirit was working in the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, who brought them messages from heaven; nay, it was working in their own hearts, and compelling them to act on the inspiration of the prophets; for had not the Lord, barely a month since, "*stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, and the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people,*" so that they had "*hearkened unto the voice of the Lord their God, and did according to the words of Haggai the prophet, since God had sent him*" (chap. 1: 12-14)? Here, then, was the proof that God was with them. Here

was the proof that His word or covenant with them still held good; for the presence and activity of His Spirit in their midst was the surest of all signs that both God and His word remained with them, and had not been alienated or withdrawn. Why, then, should they fear, let the old men say what they would? *Cor.*

**4.** Here is the temper for all Christian workers. Let them realize the duty of strength, let them have recourse to the fountain of strength; let them mark the purpose of strength, which is "work," as Haggai puts it so emphatically. We have nothing to do with the magnitude of what we may be able to build. It may be very poor beside the great houses that greater ages or men have been able to rear. But whether it be a temple brave with gold and cedar, or a log-hut, it is our business to put all our strength into the task, and to draw that strength from the assurance that God is with us. A. M.

**5.** This indicates convulsions among the great nationalities of the world—Assyrian, Chaldean, Medo Persian, and Grecian—to pave the way for the coming of Messiah's kingdom. They dash one against another, each in succession overwhelming its immediate predecessor, but each revolution ripening the world for the coming of Messiah. In a similar strain Ezekiel says (21: 27): "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him.*" In this view of the sense, the next verse will be explanatory—"Yea, I will shake all nations," etc. This passage, almost beyond a doubt, affirms (1) That the covenant made at Sinai is still in force, no less since the Captivity than before; and (2) that God's Spirit also still abides with the people; so that for both reasons the people ought not to fear, but be strong and of good courage. With such a covenant of promise, and such a present, indwelling Spirit, why should they bewail the lack of those external splendors which pertained to the Temple of Solomon? H. C.

**6.** This prophecy should be compared with the contemporary prophecies of Zechariah, in which prosperity to Israel is foretold in connection with the discomfiture of the heathen nations by whom Israel had been oppressed, and who at this time were in a state of rest and security (Zech. 1: 11, 14, 15, 21; 2: 7-9). "*I will shake the heavens,*" etc., is a figurative description of convulsions among the heathen kingdoms of the earth. B. C.

**6-9.** The plain historic sense of the words I suppose to be this. They would understand

that a great convulsion was at hand, in which the nations and empires that now oppressed them would be overthrown, and compelled to recognize the power of Him who had chosen the Hebrew race to be His people: that they themselves would be emancipated from their subjection to Persia, and raised to a height of freedom and strength which would set them above the reach of their adversaries; that they need have no fear about the completion of the temple, or that it would lack splendor, since He was with them to whom the silver and the gold belonged; and that, when the temple was complete, God would grant them a settled peace, and so manifest His power among them as that the last glory of His house and kingdom should surpass the first. If this was, as probably it was, the sense in which the Jews took the words of Haggai, we can well believe that, as they listened to them, their hearts would be filled with new courage. That, besides their first historical meaning, Haggai's words (verse 7) had a larger predictive and Messianic meaning, the words themselves bear witness. They are of too wide and lofty a sweep to be exhausted by the first fulfilment. And though perhaps Haggai himself never saw, or never clearly saw, what and what manner of thing the Spirit of God that was in him did signify, nevertheless we, with whom his words remain, and the Spirit which can alone quicken the Word to life, may well believe that he testified beforehand, if not of the sufferings of Christ, yet "of the glory that should follow." *Cor.*

Verses 6-9 set things invisible over against the visible. In general terms the prophet announces a speedy convulsion, partly symbolical and partly real, in which "all nations" shall be revolutionized, and, as a consequence, shall become Jehovah's worshippers, bringing their treasures to the temple, and so filling the house with glory. This shall be because Jehovah is the true possessor of all their wealth. But the scope of verse 9 seems to transcend these promises, and to point to an undescribed "glory," still greater than that of the universal flocking of the nations with their gifts, and to reach a climax in the wide promise of peace given in the temple, and thence, as is implied, flowing out "like a river" through a tranquillized world. *A. M.*

The prophet seems to point at two events, which should happen at different periods of time. One is, the destruction of the Jewish religion, temple-worship and political government, in consequence of the coming of the Messiah; and the establishment of a new law,

and spiritual kingdom by His death and resurrection, that should never be destroyed; and that as the delivery of the Musical law at Mount Sinai was accompanied with mighty signs and prodigies in the heavens and the earth, so should the law of Christ be introduced with prodigies, which accordingly happened. This sense of the prophecy is confirmed in the twelfth of Hebrews, at the end, where it is quoted. The other is, the "shaking of all nations," antecedently to the advent of the Messiah. This denotes disturbances and revolutions of States, by war and conquest; and it is to be noted that these "shakings" began quickly after the giving out of this prophecy, and continued with little interruption down to our Saviour's approach. For the Persian monarchy was quickly overturned by the Greeks, and the Grecian monarchy was again swallowed up by the Romans; and Rome, after devouring all the kingdoms that lay within the flight of her conquering eagle, fell into civil wars that lasted till the empire and an universal peace were settled in the time of Augustus. The Jewish nation had her share in these great commotions, being first oppressed by the Syrians, and afterward reduced under the Roman yoke, and made a Roman province under a governor of that nation. *Abp. Hort.*

#### 7. Desirable things of all nations.

The Hebrew word is plural, and is the same elsewhere used for "pleasant" or "precious" vessels. The reference that follows to the "silver and gold" shows that what the prophet had in mind was the glory that would accrue to the temple from the free-will offerings of Gentile converts. *Plumptre.*

What the text asserts is simply this, that by reason of the offerings of the Gentiles, the later glory and adornment of the house of God should far exceed the promise of its present condition; and that the calamities about to fall on the heathen nations should give peace to Jerusalem. Thus viewed verses 7 and 9 are very naturally linked together by verse 8. The fact that the passage is not quoted by the Evangelists in connection with the presence of our Lord in the temple is significant. Especially might we have expected to find St. Matthew claiming the fulfilment of Haggai's words in his description of our Lord's visit to the temple (Matt. 21: 12-14). *B. C.*

Let it be borne in mind that this entire passage grows out of the contrast between the meagreness of the new temple and the wealth and splendor of the old, and out of the consequent discouragement and depression of the



Lord's people. He calls their special attention to this wide contrast (verse 3). He proceeds to intimate (verses 4, 5) that the absence of gold and silver, and of material splendor in this new temple, may be abundantly compensated by His spiritual blessings; by the fact that "*I am with you*," and the further fact that the covenant and the Spirit are still remaining. He advances yet in the same line of thought—I am about to convulse the nations—to revolutionize the state of the world, and thus, as the ultimate outcome, *the desirable things* of all nations—their wealth, beauty and glory—shall come to Zion; and "I will fill this temple with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." The silver and the gold of all the world are Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, and by the might of My power over the hearts of men and over all human society, it shall be consecrated to Immanuel's kingdom. Special stress must be accorded to this frequent repetition of the phrase, "saith the Lord of hosts," closing each of three successive verses, 7, 8, 9. Let it also be borne in mind that, according to this construction, the Lord speaks precisely to that which constituted the chief solicitude of the pious Jews. They were saying in their heart: How much we do miss the riches—the silver, the gold, the cedars, the tapestry—of that ancient temple! When and how can we ever rear a temple worthy of the God of our fathers? We are very poor; shall we ever be rich enough to build and adorn a temple worthy of our God? To this the Lord very kindly and pertinently replies: Give yourselves no solicitudes in that line. I am the Lord God of hosts: I rule this wide world, and I can command all its silver and gold when I will for my kingdom. And *I shall do it!* In support of this construction may be urged: 1. It gives the ordinary and established sense to the word rendered "*desire*." This word is used mainly for those things which worldly men desire. 2. It meets the exigencies of the plural verb, since it embraces in its idea many things, not one only. 3. It is, as we have seen, fully in keeping with the previous context—the train of thought which occasioned this prophecy, and which introduced this passage. 4. It is equally in harmony with the subsequent context—filling this house with glory, and God's claiming the silver and the gold of the world as His own. 5. It is also in harmony with other prophecies, as Isa. 60. II. C.

The old interpretation of "the desire of all nations" as meaning Jesus Christ gave a literal fulfilment to the prophecy by His presence in the temple; but that meaning of the phrase is

untenable, both because the verb is in the plural, which would be impossible if a person were meant, and because the only interpretation which gives relevancy to verse 8 is that the expression means the silver and gold, there declared to be Jehovah's. That venerable explanation, then, cannot stand. There were offerings from heathen kings, such as those from Darius recorded in Ezra 6: 6-10, and the gifts of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7: 15), which may be regarded as incipient accomplishments; but such things as these cannot exhaust the prophecy.

It must be admitted that nothing happened during the history of that temple to answer to the full meaning of this prophecy. But was it therefore a delusion that God spoke by Haggai? We must distinguish between form and substance. The temple was the centre point of the kingdom of God on earth, the place of meeting between God and men, the place of sacrifice. The fulfilment of the prophecy is not to be found in any house made with hands, but in the true temple, which Jesus Christ has builded. He in His own humanity was all that the temple shadowed and foretold. It is in Him, and in the spiritual temple which He has reared, that Haggai's vision finds its full realization, which is yet future. The powers that issue from Him shattered the Roman empire, have ever since been casting earth's kingdoms into new moulds, and have still destructive work to do. The "once more" began when Jesus came, but the final "shaking" lies in front still. Every smaller revolution in thoughts or sweeping away of institutions is a prelude to that great "shaking" when everything will go except the kingdom that cannot be moved. Its result shall be that the treasures of the nations shall be poured at His feet who is "worthy to receive riches," even as other prophecies have foretold that "men shall bring unto Thee the wealth of the nations" (Isa. 6: 11; Rev. 21: 24, 26). In that true temple the glory of the Shechinah, which was wanting in the second, forever abides, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," and in it dwells forever the dove of peace, ready to glide into every heart that enters to worship at the shrine. Jesus Christ is not the "Desire of all nations" which shall come to the temple, but is the temple to which the wealth of all nations shall be brought, in whom the true glory of a manifested God abides, and from whom the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and is His own peace too, shall enter reconciled souls, and calm turbulent passions, and

reconcile contending peoples, and diffuse its calm through all the nations of the saved who there "walk in the light of the Lord." A. M.

**9.** *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former. Rather, Greater shall be the later glory of this house than the former.* So the LXX. The adjectives belong to the noun *glory*, not to *house*. If Zerubbabel's building was a second temple and not a rebuilding of Solomon's, then Herod's temple, the temple visited by Jesus, was a third temple; and with this further difficulty, that it seems to have been more highly adorned than either of the other buildings. In Haggai's view there was but one temple. B. C.—The antithesis really lies between the former and the latter glory of this same temple then in building—its "former glory" being what it had under Zerubbabel, and onward down through what remained of the age before Christ; and the latter, that which it shall attain when the desirable things of all nations shall come into it; when the wealth and beauty of the world shall be consecrated to Immanuel, who shall reign in His own spiritual temple, filling it with the glory of His own presence. H. C.

**And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.** As if He had said, I can easily accumulate riches far exceeding those which Solomon collected, and which may be lavished by the monarchs of the earth in all the exuberance of their wealth, "the silver and the gold are Mine;" but I will bestow on this house a nobler gift, here will I display a costlier treasure, "in this place will I give peace." There Jesus Christ, the great peace-maker, preached the gospel of peace; in that temple He wrought many of His miracles; and in its immediate vicinity, on Mount Calvary, offered Himself up for the sins of the world. R. Hall.

**10-23.** The ninth month of the Jewish year answers to the period between the middle of November and the middle of December. At this period, in Palestine, the winter crops have been sown, and the early or autumnal rain has set in. It was on the twenty-fourth day of this month, when, as we may suppose, the rains were well on, that the word of the Lord came once more to Haggai the prophet. On the very day he spoke it was exactly three months after the building of the temple had been resumed, and about two months after he had been moved to relieve the depression of the builders by the glowing hopes and promises of his second prophecy. Car.

**10-19.** Works and sacrifices are displeasing

to God so long as the rebuilding of the temple is neglected. The calamities caused by this neglect, and the blessings to follow on renewal of the work.

**12-14.** The scope of the questions propounded and of the answers given in verses 12, 13 is that no ceremonial obedience would be acceptable to God, so long as His will respecting the temple was being set at naught; and that disobedience on this one point was a contamination for which no ceremonial observances could atone. B. C.

The priests say: 1. Ceremonial holiness is not imparted by the touch. 2. Ceremonial uncleanness *is* imparted by the touch. This doctrine of the ceremonial law the Lord applies to the people. They had sinned in neglecting to build the Lord's temple. By reason of this sin, their moral state became analogous to that of the man ceremonially unclean. This sin imparted its moral character to all they did. The Lord could not take pleasure in the labors of their hands; it all became unclean. On the other hand, if they should do any good thing, it could not carry its good quality over to anything else they might do. Under the law of God, works of supererogation are unknown. H. C.

In like manner as "holy flesh," or any part of a sacrifice, will not make anything else which it touches to become holy; so neither have the sacrifices of this people, which have been all along offered since their leaving off the work of My temple, made them holy or acceptable unto God. But, on the contrary, as the touch of an unclean person renders what he touches unclean also, so the very sacrifices of this people, since they have left off the building of My temple, are become unclean or unacceptable to Me, by reason of that uncleanness or impurity of their minds, which has caused their neglect of My house. Dr. Walls.

By comparing them to the man who carried sacred flesh in the skirt of his garment, but did not therefore sanctify the bread his garment brushed, or the pottage, or the wine, or the oil, Haggai taught them that the election of God was of itself no guarantee of prosperity, that it did not necessarily involve a blessing on all the labor of their hands. They must be true to that election. They must serve the God who had chosen them, and keep His law, before they could look for His blessing on their toils. And they had not been true to Him or to His law. They had lost their sanctity by their sins, just as the "cleanest" Hebrew lost his purity the moment he touched a corpse.

They had forgotten God, and let His house lie waste while they built sumptuous houses for themselves. They had shown that they did not care for His presence or His law. And it was this moral uncleanness which had worked like an infection through the land, and which took visible form in the blight and the mildew which had destroyed their growing crops. Themselves unclean, everything they touched became unclean—all kinds of food, "all the work of their hands," and even "that which they had offered *there*"—that is, on the altar of sacrifice, which they had long since set up on its ancient base (Ezra 3 : 3). In fine, the sole cause of their deficient harvests was their forgetfulness of God, and the sins which that forgetfulness had induced. *Cor.*

This statement has not been improved upon in all these five-and-twenty centuries. The persistent sin will contaminate and discredit all the good and honorable acts; the good deed will not be of any avail to sanctify the sin. The show of good in a bad life is not by any means always due to conscious hypocrisy. Sometimes it is so due; and these cases are the most melancholy in the natural history of sin. But often it comes of tact and good taste, a sense of the fitness of things, an indisposition to affront or distress the sensibilities of innocent people. And often, also, it comes of a strong, unaffected religious sentimentality, which delights in the poetry and pathos of religion, in the high walks of theologic argument, and kindles into great fervors in the conflicts and triumphs of the Church, but which stands in no practical governing relation with the conscience and the life. As gross hypocrisy is the most repulsive form of this so-called "double life," so this sincere sentimentality is the most illusive and perilous—the most baffling to the diagnosis of spiritual physicians. But let no man, in either case, flatter himself that he is living at once on both sides of the boundary between a right purpose of life and a wrong purpose of life. There is no residuum of humanity left when the judgment of God's Word and of men's honest conscience divides "between the righteous and the wicked—between him that (in his personal choice) serveth God and him that (in his personal choice) serveth Him not." S. S. T.

**15-17.** While the people are pondering this simple yet startling application of Haggai's parable, he once more employs and repeats his favorite formula, "Set your heart," and bids them ponder the history of the last fourteen years. How had it fared with them before

they resumed the building of the temple, "laying stone to stone"? Was it not true that up to that time, do what they would, they did nothing to purpose? And *why* were their just hopes thus miserably disappointed? Simply because God was against them, because He was punishing their neglect of Him. It was He who had sent the blight and the mildew to prey upon their corn; it was He who had smitten the budding vines with hail. And yet no one of them had had the wit to see whence their miseries came, or the grace to turn in penitence and amendment to Him who chastened them! Now at last, let them consider more wisely the years which lay between to-day and the day full fourteen years ago, when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid; and they would see that it was their uncleanness which had defiled everything they touched, and made it abominable to God, so that all the labor of their hands miscarried. *Cor.*

The Lord would have them review the period from that day backward to the point where the building of the temple commenced, and so from that day onward to the present, and observe how fearfully their harvests had been blighted. "I smote you with blasting and blight, yet ye moved not toward Me"—literally, "there was nothing of you to Me." Up to this point His chastisements had proved altogether unavailing. II. C.

**18, 19.** The harvest will not and shall not fail them, says the prophet. From this day forward God will bless them. The fields shall be covered with corn; the terraced hills shall be loaded with the purple grapes. Now that they have returned to Him, God will return to them. The heaven shall no more withhold its dew, nor the earth its fruit. *Cor.*—Is the seed yet in the barn? Yes it is, and not yet thrown into the ground; the fruit-trees do not as yet bud, the vine and the fig tree and the olive-tree have not as yet brought forth, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest and vintage next year; nature does not promise it; but now that you begin to apply yourselves in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promises it. He has said, From this day I will bless you. "I will bless you, and then you shall soon recover all your losses, shall thrive as fast as before you went backward; for the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and those whom He blesseth are blessed indeed." When we begin to make conscience of our duty to God, we may expect His blessing; and this tree of life is so known by its fruits, that one may discern almost to a day a remarkable turn

of Providence, in favor of those that return in a way of duty; so that they and others may say that from this day they are blessed. II.

**20-23.** A word of encouragement specially addressed to Zerubbabel as the temporal head of the restored nation; and as such it declares the approaching overthrow of the thrones and kingdoms of the heathen, and the weakening of their political and military power. That Zerubbabel needed to be stirred up and encouraged in the prosecution of the work laid upon him may be inferred from 1: 12-14. The moral effect of the Captivity, as a discipline of suffering leading to repentance and amendment of life, had begun to grow weaker by the lapse of time. In that furnace of affliction the national tendency to idolatry had been burned out of the national heart, never to reappear. The idolatry of Babylon had had no attraction for the people who were the bondslaves of its votaries. But the transition from that state of bondage which inspired the mournful notes of the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm to the freedom and practical independence which followed the return to Judea was not without its own temptations. What these temptations were may be inferred from the warnings of Zechariah, Haggai's colleague and contemporary (Zech. 7: 9, 10; 8: 16, 17). B. C.

On the very day on which he prophesied of the returning favor of Heaven to the people, Haggai also animated the heart of their prince by disclosing God's purpose to fulfil His covenant with David through the line of Zerubbabel. Just as Judah had been chosen from among the sons of Jacob, and David from among the sons of Jesse, and Solomon from among the sons of David, so now Zerubbabel is chosen from among all the descendants of the royal house, to be the heir of the promise. Of him, concerning the flesh, the Messiah was to come, and did come.

Here, then, while his prophetic soul is not simply dreaming of things to come, but seeing in Him who was to come the Darling of Jehovah and the Desire of all nations, we part with the prophet Haggai. Like all the goodly fellowship of the prophets, he teaches that sin brings judgment; that judgment means mercy, and is designed for correction; that repentance secures the forgiveness of sin, and that amendment of life has power to turn the very curse of God into a benediction. And, like his brethren, he is made strong for teaching these truths in an evil age, by his assured conviction that good will yet triumph over evil; that, sooner or later, the Christ of God will bring in

a kingdom, wide as the earth, in which truth shall reign and righteousness and peace. *Cor.*

In order to understand the meaning of the prophecy which permits some other fulfillment than the literal, we note the function of the temple under the Old Testament covenant. The temple was the centre of the ancient theocracy. It was the place where God met man and revealed Himself. The real glory of the temple was not its external glory, although this glory was the fruit and symbol of precious spiritual service. Whatever might be the embodiment of the same truths, the vehicle of the same service, the point of meeting between God and man would really continue the temple. We may note the following facts as giving a real fulfilment of the prophecy: 1. This house had a glory in some real sense superior to the former glory. As centre of worship it represented the more spiritual life and faith which existed after the Captivity. Especially are to be noted prayer, which began to take its proper place in common public worship, and the use of Scripture as seen in the regular synagogue service. 2. The Church of Christ is the invisible temple which takes the place of the visible temple. It is the centre of the later theocracy. Israel failed to see the truths of which the visible temple was the embodiment and symbol; hence it was destroyed and the Christian Church substituted. In the extravagant regard for the visible glory of the ancient temple, and for its ritual, the Jews lose sight of the spiritual worship. The spiritual nature of the invisible temple compels the remembrance of its true glory. 3. Ever since the day of Pentecost the Spirit has been arousing men—shaking the nations. 4. Powers antagonistic to God's kingdom and to His Church, as the spiritual centre of that kingdom, have been gradually destroyed. This destruction has been largely the result of mutual jealousies, or even it has been suicidal. 5. Already many peoples and their rulers have given a real or nominal allegiance as subjects in the kingdom of God. There has been constant growth of the kingdom of God among men and over the nations. 6. The glory of this kingdom is now apprehended by an ever-increasing number of its subjects as not external, not merely moral, but as spiritual power, as consisting in the fact that for every child of man it is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Thus we may close with saying that while there is no prophecy of a personal Messiah in Haggai, these prophecies are Messianic in the

broad sense inasmuch as referring to the Messianic kingdom, and that, so far as they illustrate such prophecy, Messianic prophecy is now in process of fulfilment. *Deinö.*

As the entrance of Christ into the course of humanity was brought about by the co-working of supernatural with natural elements, so both these agencies conspired in preparing the way for that great event, the centre of all things, and the aim of all preceding history. So we interpret the relations of the Jews and heathens to the appearance of Christ. The natural development of the heathen was destined, under the Divine guidance, to prepare them for receiving the new light which emanated from Jesus; and the history of the Jewish people was all preparatory to the appearance and ministry of Christ, who was to come forth out of their midst. The notion of a Messiah, carried about by the Jews in their intercourse with different nations, everywhere found a point of contact with the religious sense of men; and thus natural and revealed religion worked into each other, as well as separately, in preparing the way for the appearance of Christ. *Nander.*

Every student who reads below the surface of the letter understands that the whole course of Eastern empire and emigration, from the patriarchs, as much as the literal predictions of Jacob or Isaiah, was a making ready for just that spiritual revolution which came embodied in the Galilean carpenter, the Everlasting King. From the very beginning He was sending out, along the highways of ages, voices, two and two, of herald and psalm, of priesthood and commandments, of awakened conscience and struggling faith, of falling virtue and falling thrones, into the places whither He Himself

would come. There is a wider view of history, and of God's majestic purposes in it, still. To narrow and jealous interpreters it used to appear to be somehow a slight upon the Scriptures to suppose that the Almighty took other nations besides the Jews into His design, or that He illuminated Gentile seers and sages to catch any glimpses of the Gospel. But Scripture itself sees religion beyond the bounds of Judea. It honors Melchisedec's devotion and Balaam's vision of the Christian Star rising out of Jacob, and celebrates the adoration of the wise men, and welcomes the ships of Tarshish, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, the outstretched hands of Ethiopia. Christian scholarship in later years, rising to loftier conceptions of the Christly providence and the Divine philosophy in history, discovers proofs that, long before Mary took her way to the feast, or laid Jesus in the manger, there were great converging lines of thought and life pointing to that wonderful nativity. On the purer pages of both Greek and Latin literature there are guesses of an evangelic future; there are ideas working out from men's minds under the breath of the all inspiring Spirit, preparing the way for the reconciliation of Calvary, for the brotherhood of the race, for the Sermon on the Mount, for the parable of the Good Samaritan, for the missionary journeys of St. Paul. Over the plains of Syria, along the sea-coasts of the Mediterranean, in the northern forests, tribes and their captains were moving, thrones were put down and set up, armies were gathered and dispersed—the mighty leaders themselves not conscious for what King of kings they were opening a path, but all shaping the face of the earth for His kingdom. F. D. H.

## PROPHECY OF ZECHARIAH.

### ZECHARIAH, INTRODUCTION AND INTRODUCTORY APPEAL; CHAPTER I. 1-6.

#### *Introduction.*

ZECHARIAH calls himself the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo (1: 1, 7), whereas Ezra speaks of him as Zechariah, the son of Iddo (Ezra 5: 1; 6: 14). The discrepancy is ex-

plained by assuming that Berechiah died before Iddo, and that Zechariah succeeded his grandfather Iddo in the headship of the Davidic priestly course, which the latter held in the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the high priest (Neh. 12: 4). Zechariah is mentioned as

one of the priests, the chief of the fathers, in the days of Joiakim, the successor and son of Jeshua (Neh. 12: 16). These facts do not necessarily imply that he was a very young man when his prophetic ministry commenced, in the second year of Darius. His grandfather Iddo may well have been one of the original exiles; and though Zechariah was probably younger than Haggai, he had reached, when he came back to Jerusalem, a period of life at which the associations of residence in Chaldea had been powerful to influence the current of his thoughts and to give a color to the imagery in which his prophecies are clothed. His first prophetic utterance is dated only two months after that of Haggai, with whom he seems to have associated himself in the prosecution of a common purpose—viz., the encouragement of his fellow-countrymen in the work of rebuilding the temple and re-establishing the theocracy. The fourth year of Darius is the latest undisputed date of his prophecies (7: 1); and after the brief notice in Nehemiah (12: 16) we have no clue to the period to which his life was prolonged, beyond a tradition that he died at an advanced age and was buried beside Haggai. B. C.

The Book of Zechariah consists of two parts—chaps. 1-8 and 9-14. The first part contains three or more prophecies for the temple builders specifically dated in the second and fourth years of Darius (Zech. 1: 1, 7; 7: 1). The second part consists of two "burdens": "The burden . . . upon the land of Hadrach (Zech. 9-11), and "The burden . . . concerning Israel" (Zech. 12-14). It is very different from the first part. W. J. B.

Zechariah began to prophesy in the eighth month of the second year of Darius Hystaspes, B.C. 520, contemporary with Haggai, when Zerubbabel was governor of Judah, and Joshua was high priest. At this period, the great matters of interest in the visible kingdom of God were the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the resettlement of the returned and still-returning captives from Chaldea, and yet more especially the rebuilding of the temple, and the culture of the faith and religious life of the people composing the new community. In many respects it was a time of laying again the foundations of religion and morals, and of planting anew those institutions which were to be the fountains of their future religious life, and hence of their abiding prosperity. Consequently, there was abundant work for the prophets of the Lord. It is pleasant to note that their work was more hopeful and less dis-

couraging than that of their predecessors for many generations. The people were more impressible; the word of the Lord was effective; the spirit of obedience, and not of rebellion, was in the main predominant. Hence, most of the messages sent from the Lord by Zechariah were of cheerful tone, breathing far more of promise than of threatening.

The reader will notice in this prophet (relatively to the whole amount of his writings) more predictions of the Messiah than in any other. The people were at first a small and feeble band, estimated in comparison with other tribes and sovereignties about them. They could scarcely have stood their ground against these hostile powers, save under the protection of the Persian throne. In this throne, God had remarkably provided for their security. Hence, they had great reason to feel that in this respect their salvation and national life were from the Lord. In the same line of thought the Lord often revealed to them that Greater Patron and more glorious Refuge, ere long to appear in the person of Immanuel, the real King of Zion.

The first six chapters are distinguished from the rest of the book, and indeed from most of the other prophetic writings of the Old Testament, by the blending of symbol and vision. The things presented to the prophet in vision were highly symbolic. Most of these symbols were so far explained to the prophet as to give us an adequate clue to their significance. Some critics have assumed that the diversity in the point of symbolic vision, between the first six chapters and the remaining eight, is sufficient proof that the latter portion was not written by the same Zechariah. The only valid ground for this assumption must be another further back—viz., that, if God reveals any truth to a given prophet by symbolic visions, He must pursue this precise method and no other without variation throughout that prophet's life. I look upon this assumption as one of the follies, not to say absurdities, of hypercriticism. The book throughout is richly instructive, fraught with spiritual life and power, and consolatory to the feeble but trusting children of God. H. C.

The later date of the last six chapters and their being the work of Zechariah, the son of Iddo, have been maintained in England by Blayney, Henry, Scott, Henderson, Ayre, etc.; in Germany by Carpzov, Beckhaus, Jahn, Köster, Hengstenberg, Hävernicks, Keil, De Wette (in the later editions of his Introduction), Stähelin, etc.; in the United States by Moore, etc.

Those who impugn the later date of Zech. 9-14 rest their arguments on the change in style and subject after chap. 8, but differ much in the application of their criticism. In reply to the arguments alleged by the advocates of the theories that chaps. 9-14 are by one or two prophets different from Zechariah, the son of Iddo, Keil, Stähelin, etc., urge that the difference of style is not greater than may reasonably be accounted for by the change of subject, that the predictions which do occur in the first section have a general similarity to those of the second, that the same peculiar forms of expression occur in the two sections, and that the historical references in the later chapters are perfectly consistent with a post-exile date. *Die B.*

De Wette, in the first three editions of his "Introduction to the Old Testament," accepted the theory of two authors, but has since affirmed that the quotations or allusions in the last six chapters not merely to Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Amos, but even to Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Ezekiel, are so many, that the author must have lived after the Exile. So also a closer examination of the historical allusions has shown that they all agree with the political state of things in Zechariah's days; and to this we must add what after all is the great argument, that the canon of Old Testament Scripture was settled scarcely a lifetime after Zechariah's death, and was in course of preparation long before, so that it is hard to conceive that so great a mistake could possibly have been made as to ascribe to one of the prophets who flourished in post-exilic days the writings of one of the older seers. The very fact that there is a dissimilarity of style would have prevented the mistake; nor can we imagine that any one would have attributed these chapters to the same author as the first eight unless they had really been his. R. P. S.

It is highly probable, from the apparent difference both of style and subject, that they came forth at a different and more advanced period of our prophet's life. It is not at all surprising if this writer, as he advanced in years and dignity, should have learned to express himself in a tone of more elevation and energy. At such distant periods also, as we suppose, the subject of course would be materially changed. For he would no longer have occasion to stimulate his countrymen to the building of the temple, which was already completely finished; but he was actually engaged in predicting some remarkable occurrences, that would distinguish his own and the neighboring nations in remote periods, some of them per-

haps not yet arrived; and in urging an immediate reformation of national manners. *Blayney.*

Whatever the origin of these prophecies, all will unite in admiration of their majestic, if sometimes weird and sombre grandeur. They are couched in a style of much power and imaginative beauty. The religious conceptions, marked as they are by inevitable imperfections, are in their essential contents profound and creative. How great has been their influence can only be measured by those who are acquainted with Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings. The part they play in the Messianic delineations of the New Testament needs not to be recounted. In each and all of its elements and influence the Book of Zechariah has amply vindicated its right to a place in the history of the old dispensation, and beyond the measure of many other prophecies has prepared and heralded the advent of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. *Elmhurst.*

#### *Outline Analysis of the Book.*

Chap. 1: 1-6 is introductory, comprising a brief but earnest appeal to his countrymen to turn from their evil ways—an appeal founded upon the experience of their forefathers in regard to the judgments as well as the mercies of Jehovah.

Chaps. 1: 7-6: 8 contains a series of eight prophetic visions presented to the mind of the prophet in one night—viz., the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, in the second year of Darius. As might have been inferred, this identity of time carries with it an identity of purpose, which runs through the whole series—viz., the encouragement of the Jews under their present hindrances and trials by the promise of the destruction of the heathen powers around them, and of the restoration of the theocracy under its civil and ecclesiastical leaders. In dealing with this theme, Zechariah, after the example of the older prophets, and guided by the inspiration of Jehovah, unfolds as in a type the spiritual victories and the spiritual establishment of the kingdom of Messiah.

Chap. 6: 9-15 is a symbolical transaction of precisely similar import to the preceding visions. It prefigures the union of the regal and the priestly offices in the person of Christ, His work as the builder up of His Church, and the gathering in of the Gentiles. Zechariah himself and those among whom he prophesied may or may not have been conscious of this scope of his words; but the event constitutes our title to apply them in this sense, and to regard them

as a proof of the assertion that to Him give all the prophets witness.

Chaps. 7, 8. Quitting both vision and symbol, we have in these chapters an example of the practical functions of the prophetic office in solving questions of duty. Were the fasts which had been enjoined as commemorative of those national judgments which had marked God's displeasure with His people, to be continued now that their sins had been repented of and forsaken, and they were entering upon a new career of national obedience and prosperity? Jehovah's answer propounds two general principles of universal application. First, that

the moral law is above the ceremonial; and secondly, that His promises are *conditional* on obedience to His precepts. These truths being admitted and acted upon, fasts are to be changed into feasts, and the Gentiles are to be brought in to worship the God of the Jews.

Chaps. 9-14. These chapters agree with the preceding prophecies of Zechariah in indicating the overthrow of the heathen powers of the earth, and in foreshadowing the coming of Messiah, and the establishment of His kingdom. In this respect they share a character which is common to many of the earlier prophetic writings. B. C.

### ZECHARIAH'S FIRST PROPHECY: INTRODUCTORY.

#### CHAP. 1: 1-6.

**1: 1** In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto 2 Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, The LORD hath been 3 sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Return unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD 4 of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Return ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but 5 they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. Your fathers, where are they? and 6 the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? and they turned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

**1.** *In the eighth month.* Corresponding with the latter part of October and the beginning of November. The work in the house of God had been already resumed this same year, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month—that is, the beginning of September—in pursuance of a Divine message delivered by the prophet Haggai (Hag. 1: 14, 15). *Blatancy.*—This message of Zechariah comes in between that prophecy of Haggai, which ends at Hag. 2: 9, and that which is contained in Hag. 2: 10-19.

**4.** *The former prophets.* Zechariah quotes the substance of passages in Hosea, Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. B. C.

**4-6.** Let the people consider. Did not the words which God sent by those former prophets "*take hold of your fathers*"? Did they slip off as things of loose grasp, and prove void of result? Did not those awful threatenings *hold on*, and have not you yourselves seen and felt the terrible judgments which those words por-

tended? They themselves were forced to admit this. They returned and said—*i.e.*, they took a new and better view of the case under the pressure of appalling facts, and then they said, All that God thought and threatened to do unto us as a nation He has done! Let their children take warning! H. C.

**5.** This verse and the next are closely connected. The idea is that of John 8: 52, *Abraham is dead, and the prophets.* The generations to whom God's warnings had been sent of old, and the bearers of those warnings, have passed away, but God's word and God's decrees stand fast for all generations; and therefore, as they overtook your fathers, so will they overtake you. The prophets of the post-captivity period took their stand upon the past history of the people, upon former miracles and upon fulfilled prophecy. They regarded these as the true foundations upon which the faith and obedience of the Jews were to be built up. B. C.

### SECOND PROPHECY: EIGHT VISIONS, CHAPS. 1: 7-6: 8; AND A SYMBOLICAL TRANSACTION, 6: 9-15.

ZECHARIAH'S second prophecy extends from 1: 7 to 6: 15, and is dated the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month of the second year

of Darius—four months later than the prophecy of Haggai—perhaps early in February, B.C. 519, as we now date events. It is a description



of eight visions, one apparently following another in a single night, followed by a message connected with the coming of certain men from Babylon (Zech. 6:9 sqq.). We naturally ask whether these men brought with them from Babylon the answer of Darius in regard to the temple (see Ezra 6), but there is no clew to the answer.

In the first vision (Zech. 1:7-17) the prophet sees men on horseback—the mounted police of Jehovah's empire—who report that they have made their rounds in the earth, and found everything quiet. Their chief, to whom they make this report, is the angel of Jehovah. On hearing it (verses 12-17) he makes intercession for Jerusalem, and an encouraging message is then given the prophet. The descriptive part is in prose, while the intercession and the message to the prophet are in verse. The second vision (Zech. 1:18-21) is of four horns that have been tossing Judah, and four "workmen" who drive the horns away. The third vision (Zech. 2:1-13) is of a man measuring Jerusalem, and being informed that Jerusalem will outgrow all measurements. This information is given in poetic lines (verses 4 *b*, 5), and is followed by a spirited lyric on Zion's escape from the north land (verses 6-13). As I understand it, this lyric is represented as uttered by the angel of Jehovah. These first three visions concern Judah, Jerusalem, the people in general. The fourth vision concerns especially Joshua, the priestly leader of the people; and the fifth mainly concerns Zerubbabel, their civil leader. The sixth vision (Zech. 5:1-4) is that of the flying scroll, and the seventh (Zech. 5:5-11) is that of the woman in the ephah-jar. These two mainly concern the wickedness of the people by which Jehovah's mercies are hindered. The eighth vision (Zech. 6:1-8) is a vision of Jehovah's chariots, one of which is sent on a mission to the north land. W. J. B.

In a dream of the night there passed before the eyes of the prophet a series of visions (1:7-6:15). These visions are obscure, and, accordingly, the prophet asks their meaning. The interpretation is given by an angel who knows the mind and will of Jehovah. In the first vision (1:7-15) the prophet sees, in a valley of myrtles, a rider upon a roan horse, accompanied by others who, having been sent forth to the four quarters of the earth, had returned with the tidings that the whole earth was at rest (with reference to Hag. 2:20). Hereupon the angel asks how long this state of things shall last, and is assured that the indifference of the heathen shall cease, and that

the temple shall be built in Jerusalem. The second vision (2:1-17, A. V. 1:18-2:13) explains *how* the promise of the first is to be fulfilled. It symbolizes the destruction of the heathen kingdoms hitherto combined against Jerusalem, and the rapid increase of its population. The old prophets, in foretelling the happiness and glory of the times which should succeed the Captivity in Babylon, had made a great part of that happiness and glory to consist in the gathering together again of the whole dispersed nation in the land given to their fathers. This vision was designed to teach that the expectation thus raised—the return of the dispersed of Israel—should be fulfilled. The next two visions (3, 4) are occupied with the temple, and with the two principal persons on whom the hopes of the returned exiles rested. The permission granted for the rebuilding of the temple had no doubt stirred afresh the malice and the animosity of the enemies of the Jews. Joshua, the high-priest, had been singled out, it would seem, as the especial object of attack, and perhaps formal accusations had already been laid against him before the Persian court. The prophet, in vision, sees him summoned before a higher tribunal, and solemnly acquitted, despite the charges of the Satan or adversary. This is done with the forms still usual in an Eastern court, the filthy garments of the accused being exchanged for the robe of honor put on the innocent. The last vision (4) supposes that all opposition to the building of the temple shall be removed. This sees the completion of the work. The two next visions (5:1-11) signify that the land, in which the sanctuary has just been erected, shall be purged of all its pollutions. First, the curse is recorded against wickedness in *the whole land* (not as A. V. "earth;" 5:3). Next, the unclean thing, whether in the form of idolatry or any other abomination, shall be utterly removed. And now the night is waning fast, and the morning is about to dawn. Chariots and horses appear, issuing from between two brazen mountains, the horses like those in the first vision; and these receive their several commands and are sent forth to execute the will of Jehovah in the four quarters of the earth. Thus, then, the cycle of visions is completed. Scene after scene is unrolled till the whole glowing picture is presented to the eye. All enemies crushed; the land re-peopled and Jerusalem girt as with a wall of fire; the temple rebuilt, more truly splendid than of old, because more abundantly filled with a Divine Presence; the leaders of the people as-

sured in the most signal manner of the Divine protection; all wickedness solemnly sentenced, and the land forever purged of it—such is the magnificent panorama of hope which the prophet displays to his countrymen. A symbolical act immediately follows. Three Israelites had just returned from Babylon, bringing with them rich gifts to Jerusalem, apparently as contributions to the temple, and had been received in the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Thither the prophet is commanded to go, and to employ the silver and gold of their offerings for the service of Jehovah. He is to make of them two crowns, and to place these on the head of Joshua, the high-priest—a sign that, in the Messiah who should build the temple, the kingly and priestly offices should be united. *Die. B.*

The first eight chapters form a collection of utterances, complete and circumscribed, directed throughout to promote the erection of the temple. The work had been paralyzed by actual difficulties, but still more by supineness of spirit and despond. What the people needed was the inspiration of a soaring faith and the heartening of buoyant hope. This is precisely the spirit that animates the addresses of Zechariah. *Einsie.*—The object of Zechariah is precisely that of Haggai. It is to rouse an indolent, to encourage a desponding, and to abash a backsliding people. This he does, if not with greater energy, yet by bolder types, and through the force of broader glimpses into the future, than his coadjutor. The red horses, the four horns, the stone with seven eyes, the candlestick of gold, the olive trees, the flying roll, the ephah and the talent of lead, the four chariots from between the two mountains, the staves Beauty and Bands, the cup of trembling, the burdensome stone, and the fountain of purification, are not mere brilliant dreams, but are closely connected with the main purpose of the prophecy. *Gilfillan.*

These visions were designed partly to animate and encourage the Jews in the work of rebuilding the temple and restoring the worship of Jehovah, partly to warn them against transgression, and especially against rebelliousness and apostasy from Him. As, however, all God's dealings toward His ancient people bear an analogy to His dealings toward His spiritual Church, and especially as in these visions there is reference more or less immediate to the Messiah, they convey instruction and counsel profitable for the people of God as such in all

ages. This book of prophecy has, consequently, engaged much of the attention of students of Scripture at all times in the Christian Church. Luther says of it: "The prophet Zechariah is a paragon (Ausbund), to my thinking the most excellent. For he appeared at a time when it was supremely needful to comfort and encourage the people, and along with that to keep them for the coming reign of Christ and under training." *W. L. Alexander.*

The chief difficulty felt by the student of these eight visions is that of clearly distinguishing and identifying the superhuman *dramatis persone* with whom the prophet is in ecstatic communication. They appear to be five in number—viz.: 1. *The man riding upon a red horse, who stood among the myrtle trees* (1:8). He is clearly identified (1:11) with the angel of the Lord. 2. *The riders on the red, speckled and white horses.* These are subordinate created angels, who report to the angel of the Lord. 3. The angel described by the prophet in eleven places (1:9, 13, 14, 19; 2:3; 4:1, 4, 5; 5:5, 10; 6:4) by the phrase *the angel that talked with me*, or, more exactly, *that spoke in me*. So Dr. Pusey, who adds, "The very rare expression seems meant to convey the thought of an inward speaking, whereby the words should be borne directly into the soul without the intervention of the ordinary outward organs. God says to Moses (Num. 12:6-9), *If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak (lit.) in him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so . . . in him will I speak mouth to mouth; and Habakkuk says (2:1) of the like inward teaching, I will watch to see what He will speak in me.* It is the characteristic title of one attendant angel, who was God's expositor of the visions to Zechariah." Similarly Canon Drake ("Speaker's [or Bible] Commentary") says he was "the [created] angel, whose office it was to interpret to the prophet what he saw and heard." 4. In the third vision (chap. 2) *the man with a measuring line in his hand*, whom Dr. Pusey thinks to be "probably the angel of the Lord, of whom Ezekiel has a like vision." 5. In the same vision (2:3) *another angel, who went out to meet the angel that talked with the prophet*, when he (the angel) *went forth*. Besides these must also be observed in three places (1:13, 20; 3:1) the mention of *the Lord*, who is in each almost certainly identified with the angel of the Lord. *Medd.*

## FIRST TWO VISIONS: THE HORSEMEN; THE HORNS.

## CHAP. 1: 7-21.

7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, I saw in the night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him there were horses, red, sorrel, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words, *even* comfortable words. So the angel that talked with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. Cry yet again, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

18, 19 And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord shewed me four smiths. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast down the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.

7. This is the commencement of a series of eight symbolical visions, all, it would seem, presented to the mind of the prophet in one night—that of the 24th of Sebat, corresponding to March 9th or 10th. B. C.

7-17. These verses comprise one entire and distinct vision, the first in a series, and of symbolic character. The symbols represent the executive forces by which the Lord administers His providential government over the nations. The special aim here is: 1. To assure the Hebrew people that God had more judgments to send on the nations that had oppressed them. 2. That He would greatly augment the growth and prosperity of Zion. So much for the general scope of the passage. As to the particulars, let us note that this is a night vision, presented to the mind's eye of the prophet by special Divine agencies. That men riding on horses are used to represent the executive forces of God's reign over the nations is due (we may suppose) to the use of post horses as vehicles of the royal mandates, as the nerves of communication (so to speak) from the working

brain on the throne to the remotest organs of His will in all His distant provinces. They seem to be thought of here rather as explorers to observe and report, than as executioners. The reader will better understand this representation if he will be at the pains to classify the personages of the scene thus: 1. The man riding upon a red horse (verse 8), who stood (on horseback) among the myrtle trees in the shaded vale, at the head of others also on horses of various colors; the same who (verse 10) explained and said, "These are they whom the Lord hath sent," etc., to whom the other horsemen report (verse 11); and to whom prayer is offered as "the Lord of hosts" (verse 12); and who answers so kindly (verse 13). This can be no other than the uncreated angel—the very Son of God, so often if not always the God revealed and made manifest in all the ages before His incarnation. 2. Next are His attendants, on horses, representing angels proper; those "ministers of His who do His pleasure," and whom He continually employs in the administration of His providential government on earth. They

appear (verse 8) where it must be assumed that the horses have riders upon them; also (verse 11), they report what they have seen in their mission to and fro through the earth. 3. The revealing angel, specially attendant upon the prophet as his interpreter, usually called "the angel that talked with me"—*e.g.*, verses 9, 13, and also in verse 14, where our translators have given the same Hebrew word another rendering, "that communed with me." It is the same angel who offers the prayer (verse 12), since the answer (verse 13) is given to him. That *he* offers this prayer is due to his strong sympathy with the prophet, to whom he was a sort of guardian angel. This grouping of the characters of this scene will help the reader to understand its significance. The horses and their riders are seen among the myrtle trees in a shady vale—both the myrtles and the vale indicating the low and humble condition of God's people and kingdom, especially at that time, yet showing us plainly that however low and humble in human estimation, *God was in the midst of them*, and did not disclaim to reveal precisely there His glorious Son, and under Him the angels clothed in might as the executive servants of His reign among the nations. No other speciality of meaning can be safely assigned to the color of these horses except that red commonly indicates war scenes of blood, and that the variety may suggest that God's agency embraces all varieties of manifestation—curses and blessings, war and peace. The prophet asks his attendant angel what those horses and their riders mean. He promises to show him, but the statement is given by the personage first seen and standing in the foreground of the picture—the great uncreated angel of Jehovah—"These are they whom the Lord sends to traverse the whole earth." Then they themselves come forward and make their report in the hearing of the prophet: "We have traversed the earth, and lo, all the nations are still and at rest." Even those great powers which had so cruelly oppressed the Jews were not receiving their deserved retribution. This is the main point of their report. Upon this, the revealing angel, warning in sympathy with the prophet and his people, cries, "How long, O Lord, ere Thou wilt have mercy on Jerusalem and on Judah, upon which Thou hast manifested Thine indignation now seventy years?" To this the Lord answers with words of comfort and cheer. He has purposed to scourge and soon to destroy that fierce Chaldean power, and He will surely lift up Jerusalem. Verse 15 may be paraphrased thus: "I am very sore displeased with

Chaldea and Edom; I was comparatively a little displeased with My people, Judah and Jerusalem, and therefore I suffered those powers to come down on the holy city and land; but they augmented that infliction; they gave vent to their cruel and vindictive spirit, and have quite overdone the work which I commissioned them to do. For this they are to have a fearful doom." In verse 16 the Lord promises to return in mercy and to help onward the rebuilding of the city; and in verse 17, that the population should overpass the city walls and fill the adjacent country. "Will yet choose Jerusalem" means, will yet *manifest* His loving choice of her by appropriate mercies. II. C.

8. No symbolical meaning is attributed by the Divine interpreter either to the place where the rider and his followers appeared standing, or to the color of their horses. None, therefore, need be sought by us. In comparing Zeck. 6:1-8 with Rev. 6:2-8 we may gather that in those instances difference of color in the horses implies difference of office in the riders; but *here* they have all one and the same duty—*viz.*, to walk to and fro through the earth. B. C.

12. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts. The angel (mentioned in verse 9) makes his supplication to the superior angel (verses 8, 10), who was indeed the Logos, or Son of God, being called by the name of Jehovah here and in verses 13, 20. (Cf. chaps. 3:1, 2; 12:8, 10.) W. Lorch.

13. To this Intercessor—this horseman who watches over Israel—God answers "with good words and comfortable words." This closes the vision; and then the interpreting angel bids Zechariah report to the people the substance or significance of it, to the effect that although God had given His people into the hand of their enemies that they might be chastised, yet these enemies had gone too far, had entered into the work of correction with too evident a zest, and had overstepped their commission; and that now God would compensate to His people for their sorrows.

The practical outcome or substantial meaning of this vision was this: that to every one who sees with eyes cleansed and directed aright, the angel of the Lord, or God Incarnate, appears, ready mounted, prepared to interpose in His people's behalf, and watchfully receiving the reports of His commissioners from all parts of the earth. It can readily be imagined what a difference this vision would make in the courage and hopes of the people, with what different heart and conversation they would go out to their building next morning, having been

assured that the Lord thought their punishment had gone far enough, and that now He was to show His mercies to them, *Dods*.

**11-21.** In the Hebrew text 2 : 1-4. A vision of the four horns and of the four workmasters sent to fray or harry the enemies of Judah and Jerusalem.

**11.** *Four horns*—i.e., the heathen nations by whom the Jews had been oppressed. The word *horn* occurs in the same sense in Dan. 7 : 20. The number four intimates the fact that the enemies of the Jews were around them on all sides. B. C.

**11-21.** This second vision is closely connected in significance with the first, looking especially to the destruction of those heathen powers which "had scattered Judah and Jerusalem." The "horn" is a natural emblem of power. The number four does not count so many hostile nations, but rather means all, in every quarter of the earth, toward every cardinal point of the compass, who have been pushing and scattering the saints of God. The word rendered "carpenters" should be "smiths," workers in iron or other metals, and therefore armed with suitable instruments for breaking horns. The word "fray," mostly obsolete as a verb, means to frighten. The next verb, rendered "cast out," has a stronger sense—*cast down to the ground*, so as altogether

to paralyze their power for harm. This prediction was fulfilled shortly after. Chaldea revolted against its late Medo Persian conquerors during the reign of this same Darius. He consequently attacked and subdued them, and then greatly marred the military strength and glory of Babylon. Thenceforward Chaldea was no more felt or feared as a power among the nations. H. C.

The second vision speaks for itself. When the four horns had tossed and gored Israel, four carpenters are sent to cut them down. God's zest in removing the executioners of His justice reveals His reluctance to punish. When the causes of distress have done their work, they are removed. As a matter of actual experience, men who have suffered great reverses of fortune declare that no sooner had the calamity brought them to the point of a true, hearty and permanent submission to God about it, than it was removed. There are no doubt irremovable distresses, but God can introduce into the life alleviations of distress and compensating joys. He can, at all events, enable us to see as clearly as Zechariah saw that He will not give us over to unlimited punishment, but allows present distresses only as temporary expedients which may fit us for more enduring and perfect happiness. *Dods*.

### THIRD VISION : A MAN MEASURING JERUSALEM.

#### CHAP. 2.

**2 : 1** AND I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold a man with a measuring line in his 2 hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou ? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to 3 see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that 4 talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, by 5 reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a 6 wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her. Ho, ho, flee from the 7 land of the north, saith the LORD : for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the 8 heaven, saith the LORD. Ho Zion, escape, thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 9 For thus saith the LORD of hosts : After glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled 10 you : for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine 11 hand over them, and they shall be a spoil to those that served them : and ye shall know that 12 the LORD of hosts hath sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion : for, lo, I come, and 13 I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people : and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and 14 thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the LORD shall inherit 15 Judah as his portion in the holy land, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD : for he is waked up out of his holy habitation.

**Chap. 2.** This chapter contains the substance of a third vision. In conformity to what

was said chap. 1 : 16, "a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem," a man, or an angel, ap-

pears with a measuring line in his hand, going, as he says, to take the dimensions of Jerusalem, in order to its being rebuilt according to its former extent; which was afterward done by Nehemiah. This is accompanied with a message delivered to the prophet, showing the great increase of her population and wealth; her perfect security under the Divine protection; recall of her exiles from the north country, and the punishment of those that had oppressed them; the return of God's presence to dwell in her; and the conversion of many heathen nations; and, lastly, the reinstatement of Judah and Jerusalem in the full possession of all their ancient privileges. *Dr. Blayney.*

In these visions Jehovah and the angel of the presence are used almost interchangeably, and the words spoken are attributed sometimes to one, sometimes to the other—the angel of the presence is indeed regarded as the visible manifestation of God. *Farar.*

The third vision of Zechariah was based on what was in his thoughts and under his eye from day to day—plans for restoring the city. He seemed to see a man proceeding to take measurements for the laying out of streets and walls. As we often get notice of city improvements by seeing surveyors with theodolite and chain at work, so this man with the measuring line explained that he was going to ascertain the size and capabilities of Jerusalem, and to see what could be made of the ruins. But as he passes on to his work the angel is told to run and stop him and prevent him from measuring the city and planning new walls and fortifications. He is assured that it was useless marking out boundaries, because the city is destined to exceed all ordinary dimensions and become so great that no walls would be capable of containing it.

The great increase of population here predicted was to arise partly from the return of a large number of Jews from Babylon. Very significant are the urgent appeals that were found necessary to move them to return. "Flee from the land of the north. Deliver thyself, O Zion that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." They had to be warned even that punishment was to fall on Babylon, and that they would share in it if they did not escape. For people are always apt to get hardened to that deserted and distant condition into which God banishes them for their sin. The want of high spiritual communications which at first a man mourned over he gradually gets used to. The gaiety and dissipation which

were distasteful to him he can at last scarcely abandon. The cessation from Christian work, which at first he recognized as an infliction, he becomes so used to that it frets and hardens him to resume it. *Douk.*

**1-1.** In this vision a man is seen with a measuring line, going forth to measure Jerusalem—probably its dimensions before its recent destruction—as if preparing to rebuild it on the same foundations. The angel that talked with the prophet went forth (*i.e.*, from the prophet), and another angel came forth (it may be supposed) from the Lord, to meet him and to say to him: "Hasten to that young man who has the measuring line, and tell him there is no occasion to measure the old limits of the city; the new one shall spread out beyond her former walls, and her people shall live in the surrounding country without walls, because of the multitude of men and of cattle." The whole scene was designed to impress vividly upon the prophet and his people the great promise of God respecting the growth, prosperity and glory of the new city, and ultimately of that spiritual Zion of which this was the outward symbol.

**5.** The connection of thought here is admirable: Think no more of walls to be rebuilt for the new city, nor of costly outlays to beautify and adorn it; "for I, saith the Lord, will be Myself her wall," even "a wall of fire round about her;" and I will be her adornment also—even "a glory in the midst of her." This magnificent promise we cannot suppose to have been exhausted in the days of Zechariah, nor in the entire period before the incarnation of the Son of God; but pre-eminently then when He, the great incarnation of God, became manifest in human flesh in the midst of His Zion. Yet its fulfilment began in those days of Zion's reformation and rebuilding. Our Divine Lord reasserted essentially the same thing, and made it a promise of perpetual love to His Church, when He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." *H. C.*

Those that have God for their God have Him for their glory; those that have Him in the midst of them have glory in the midst of them, and thence the Church is said to be all glorious within. And those persons and places that have God to be the glory in the midst of them have Him for a wall of fire round about them, for upon all that glory there is and shall be a defence (Isa. 4:5). Now all this was fulfilled in part, in that Jerusalem in process of time became a very flourishing city. But it was to have its full accomplishment in the Gospel

Church, which is extended far, as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it; and which has God, the Son of God, for its prince and protector. H. — This promise will receive its utmost completion in that "New Jerusalem" (described in Rev. 21:10) where "the glory of God and the Lamb" are said to be "the light thereof" (verses 11, 23. Cf. Isa. 60:19). W. Louth.

6. *Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north.* This beautiful apostrophe is addressed to such of the Jews as continued still to dwell in Babylon and the adjacent country lying north of Jerusalem, exhorting them not only to come, but to make their escape with all possible speed from a land which God was about to make the scene of His vengeance. Dr. Blayney.

8. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts—that is, the Messiah.* There is no part of Holy Scripture that more fully vindicates those confessions of our faith, which call upon us to acknowledge a plurality of persons in the Godhead, than the very remarkable passage in this and the next three verses. *Exeleigh.*

"After the glory" is an elliptical, shortened phrase, looking to verse 5, and meaning that *after having become the glory of Zion* by revealing Himself as her king, her refuge and protector, it followed naturally that He should be sent to scourge the nations that had spoiled Jerusalem—i.e., the Chaldeans, and perhaps the Edomites also. As to the persons "He" and "Me," in the phrase "He hath sent Me," etc., the language implies that the speaker who calls Himself the "Lord of Hosts" hath been sent by some one referred to as "He;" "He hath sent Me," etc. The one thus "sent" can be no other than the leading personage in the vision (1:8-13), there seen on a red horse (verse 8); to whom the other horsemen report (verse 11); to whom the angel interpreter offers prayer (verse 12); and moreover the same personage who in 2:5 says, "I will be a glory in the midst of her"—i.e., the Son of God. The antecedent of "He" is implied in thought rather than expressed in word; yet can be no other than the infinite Father—often represented in the Scriptures as sending the Son—here on a mission of providential judgments on the guilty nations that had desolated Jerusalem. The reason assigned is beautifully significant of the tenderness of even the Father's love toward His people. We often see manifestations of tenderness in Jesus Christ while wearing our nature in its human weaknesses; but here Jesus

says of His Father: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye." "Toucheth"—in the sense of doing harm. The apple is the pupil of the eye, which the Hebrews call the *little man* of the eye, or, as here, the little boy of the eye, both terms coming probably from the fact that, looking into the eye, you see a *miniature* picture of yourself. Can we realize the precious truth taught here—that God feels every injury done to His people, as we feel a wound in the apple of our eye? Then let us forever dismiss and discard the cruel assumption that the infinite God has little or no sympathy with our spiritual life, with the real welfare of His people, the interests of His truth, and the cause of human salvation! H. C.

*After the glory hath He sent Me unto the nations.* To send a person after anything implies the requisition of his services for that particular purpose. When, therefore, God is said to have sent His angel "after the glory," He must be understood to have charged Him with the means of bringing it about. Now the means which the Divine wisdom had devised for securing to His people "the glory" He had promised them, was by executing a severe vengeance on their oppressors, to manifest His concern for their honor and interest, and His resolution not to suffer their wrongs to pass off with impunity. In pursuance of this plan, and of the orders He had received, the angel says He was about to "shake" His hand over the Babylonians, by whom the Jews had lately been oppressed, and to deliver them over as "a spoil to their (former) servants." And as this is given as a reason for summoning the Jews to quit that devoted country with all possible speed, that they might not be involved in the calamities which were coming upon it, so the angel subjoins that when this came to pass according to His word, it would be a convincing proof that Jehovah had sent Him. Dr. Blayney.

*He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.* The highest expressions that language, assisted with all its helps of metaphor and resemblance, can afford, are very languid and faint in comparison of what they strain to represent when the goodness of God toward them who love Him comes to be expressed. (See Ps. 36:6; 103:11, 13.) So David strives to utter it, but with similitudes far short of the truth. If any will come near to reach it, it is that in Moses and Zechariah, where they who love God are compared to "the apple of God's

eye"—that is, to the most dear and tender part, as it were, about Him. *Isaac Barrow.*

*God has special regard for and interest in the subjects of His redeeming love.* He chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world. He gave His only begotten Son to save them from eternal ruin. His Spirit and His providence have been at work these six thousand years to accomplish His purposes respecting them. They seem nearer to Him than the unfallen angels, for they have been rescued and ransomed from ruin and death at an infinite cost. He has peculiar regard for them as the fruit of the glorious redemptive scheme by which He seeks to "reconcile all things unto Himself." They stand related to His moral dispensations, to the "everlasting kingdom" of the future state, to the exaltation and final glory of the Eternal Son of God in His work of atoning love and saving grace, as no other beings do. Is it any marvel, therefore, that he who dares to touch one of these "little ones" touches the very "apple of His eye"? It matters not how unworthy and sinful and inferior His people may be, in themselves considered, and contrasted with angels. God looks at them in the light of His own eternal and far-reaching purposes. They stand intimately related to His eternal scheme of grace. He sees in them the future heirs of His glorious kingdom, the priests and kings of the Lord Almighty. They are to be the very "crown" and glory of Christ's own eternal reward and rejoicing. Hence their names "are graven on the palms of His hands." No weapon forged against or raised to injure them shall prosper. All their interests are safe in His hands. The gates of hell shall not prevail against one of His chosen ones. His infinite heart of love encompasses them ever. His everlasting arms are underneath them. *J. M. Sherwood.*

**9.** *For, behold, I will shake Mine hand upon them.* This is the hand of Jehovah Himself, and of the Lord of Hosts Himself, which is said, in one passage of Isaiah, to be "shaken over the river" (Isa. 11 : 15); and in another, "over Egypt" (Isa. 19 : 16); and nowhere else, except in the text, is the same form of expression used in Holy Writ. *Dr. Erleigh.*

*They shall be a spoil to their servants.* As the Babylonians became to the Medes and Persians, who had been subdued, and reduced to subjection by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. *Abp. Newcome.*

Immanuel, as the God of universal providence, sent to the nations that had wasted Zion, here declares what He will do, and calls special

attention to it: "I will shake or wave My hand over them"—so much only being necessary to indicate to the executioners of His will what they were to do; and "they shall become a spoil to those who have heretofore been their servants"—*i.e.*, the nations some time in servitude under Chaldea now rise up, overcome, and spoil her. Ye shall know by your experience of Divine blessings that My commission is truly Divine. It is remarkable that the phrase "the Lord of Hosts" is used interchangeably of the Father and the Son: of the Father here; of the Son in verse 8, and elsewhere in this and the previous chapter. No other explanation of this is needed save the fact that this name is equally applicable to either, and that the Scriptures in some cases represent the Father, and in some cases the Son, as administering the government of this world. *H. C.*

**10-13.** God's promise to abide in Zion, and of the incoming of the Gentiles. Compare the parallel passages in Zeph. 3 : 14-20; Isa. 12 : 6; and *infra* 9 : 9, which, like that before us, had a first and literal fulfilment in the times following the return of the Jews from Babylon. They are all applicable in a wider and loftier sense to the dwelling of Messiah in Palestine, and to the spread of the Gospel among the heathen. *B. C.*

**10.** Closely parallel with this is Zech. 9 : 9, *There*—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee," etc. *Here*, as the reader will see, "Sing and rejoice," for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord—*i.e.*, Jehovah. This close similarity strengthens the evidence that the speaker here is the promised Messiah, and that this promised coming can be exhausted in nothing less than His appearance in human flesh, and indeed in nothing less than His abiding presence (spiritually) with His people "to the end of the world." This abiding presence, in somewhat lower forms, He manifested from the time of Zechariah onward to His incarnation. All this is indeed occasion for exultant joy.

**11.** Christ's coming to dwell incarnate and subsequently by His Spirit, the Comforter, would result in the calling of the Gentiles into His Church, and ultimately in the gathering of many nations, and in their becoming joined in the relationships of love and trust to their redeeming Saviour and King. Here recurs again that expressive phrase, "Thou shalt know" (in thine own blessed experience) that I am sent of the eternal Father, that the work is not Mine alone, but His as well—evermore sustained by



the common sympathy and the co-operative agency of each and of both. II. C.

**11.** *The Lord of Hosts hath sent Me unto thee.* It being here said that Jehovah, being sent by Jehovah, should come and dwell in the Church, enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles, who can that be but our Lord Christ, who dwelt among us and was by God His Father sent unto us? *Isaiah Barrore.*—A passage which, like this, declares that "the Lord of Hosts" was sent by one who also Himself is "the Lord of Hosts," ought not for a moment to excite astonishment in a Christian; knowing, as he must, that the second person in the Trinity, who is so often said to "have been sent by the Father," is called in the New Testament, not only "God," but also by a name which is allowed to be equivalent to "the Lord of Hosts"—viz., "the Almighty." (See John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Rev. 1:8.) *Ereleigh.*—Intimations of a plurality of persons in the Godhead seem to have been given to the Jews, as in other places of Scripture, so in those texts, where mention is made of God more than once in the same text and under different capacities: as "the Lord raining fire upon Sodom from the Lord" (Gen. 19:24); God anointing, and God anointed (Ps. 45:6, 7); "the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand" (Ps. 110:1); "the Lord sending and the Lord sent," in this passage; with sundry others of the like nature. *Amos.*

**9-12.** In closing this prophecy Zechariah encourages the people to expect that not only would Jerusalem be filled to overflowing with their kinsmen, but that God would dwell there. But the prediction runs on in language which seems too magnificent for any contemporary events: "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be My people." This is characteristic of Old Testament prophecy. It is always occasioned by some present need of the generation among whom the prophet lives, but the language employed seems larger than the occasion requires.

The events among which Zechariah lived

were only the prelude and preparation for the far greater events which were to signalize the Church's maturity; and as the prophet looked forward to the triumph of his people over present misfortunes, he could not fail to catch a glimpse of the perfect triumphs which were destined to be won by the perfected Church. Under the forms and appearances present to any one generation there lay truths and principles common to all generations. The temple was the then existing form of God's dwelling-place, the temporary expedient for Divine manifestation; but in all generations there is a manifestation of God, though not always a stone temple. And so round the whole circle of things with which God's people had to do. Through those things the prophets were, by God's inspiration, enabled to see the permanent principles which operated in them, and in speaking of the visible and familiar objects they therefore often used language which was verified not in those very objects and events then present, but only in the ultimate, highest forms which those principles and ideas were to assume.

The comprehensive promise which seemed to augur all good to Jerusalem in Zechariah's time was this: "I will dwell in the midst of thee." Beyond this, indeed, no promise can at any time go. If God dwells with us because He loves us and seeks our presence, this implies that all good will be ours. In this alone have we all that we need to balance and guide our life. To live as in a world from which God can never pass away, this is the key to happiness and energy. *Dods.*

**13.** *Be silent, O all flesh.* Let all men be "silent" in token of the profoundest reverence and submission (see Hab. 2:20), when God comes down from heaven (cf. Micah 1:3), or gives visible signs of His appearance to execute judgment upon His adversaries, or to show mercy upon His servants. Heaven is called "the habitation of God's holiness" (De. 26:15; Isa. 63:15). *W. Louth.*

#### FOURTH VISION: JOSHUA, THE HIGH-PRIEST, AND SATAN, HIS ADVERSARY, BEFORE JEHOVAH.

##### CHAP. 3.

**3:1** AND he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, 2 and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary. And the LORD said unto Satan,

The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is 3 not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, 4 and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him,

saying, Take the filthy garments from off him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have  
 5 caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel. And I  
 said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and  
 6 clothed him with garments; and the angel of the LORD stood by. And the angel of the  
 7 LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my  
 ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and shalt also  
 8 keep my course, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by. Hear  
 now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men  
 9 which are a sign: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch. For behold, the  
 stone that I have set before Joshua; upon one stone are seven eyes: behold, I will engrave  
 the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in  
 10 one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under  
 the vine and under the fig tree.

**Chap. 3.** A vision concerning Joshua, the high-priest, who appears as a type of the Jewish Church, whose adversaries are typified by the accuser or Satan. The restoration of ceremonial purity is indicated, and the advent of Messiah promised. B. C.—The first six verses describe the vision. They are in prose, except that the rebuke to Satan (verse 2) is three lines of verse. Verses 7-10, the words of the angel of Jehovah, are in poetical lines; each verse has a distinct topic. W. J. B.

*Vision the fourth.* Zechariah sees Joshua, the high-priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, as it were soliciting to be admitted to the discharge of his sacred functions, and Satan, or the adversary, standing by in the act of opposing him. The adversary receives a rebuke from Jehovah, by whose special command Joshua is stripped of his filthy garments and invested with the priestly robes of service, and a clean "mitre" or bonnet set upon his head. The angel delivers him a solemn charge. After this follows a clear and interesting prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of His Church, of which Joshua and his companions are ordained to be signs. Pardon and peace are held forth as the blessed effects of Christ's coming. *Blayney.*

Here we find Joshua, the high priest, put upon trial before Jehovah, with Satan as his accuser. According to the custom of Eastern trials, he is dressed in "filthy garments," but upon his acquittal he is clothed in a dress of honor, and a tiara, indicative of his restoration to the high-priesthood, is placed upon his head. As high-priest he is to judge the people wisely, and thereby prepare for the coming of Christ, who is called the Branch or Sprout. Moreover, to encourage him, the foundation stone of the temple is laid before him, and he is assured that the seven eyes of God, the symbol of His ever-watchful providence, shall perpetually rest upon it. R. P. S.

**I. The angel of Jehovah.** A clear idea in regard to this being is necessary to the understanding of the post exilian prophets. In Zechariah he is the same as in the earlier Old Testament books—not some angel or other, but one particular being, different from ordinary angels. One especial characteristic of him is that at one moment he is a person distinct from Jehovah, perhaps interceding with Jehovah, or sent by Jehovah, and in the next moment he speaks or acts in the character of Jehovah Himself. In this he is like "the Word," or "the Son," of the New Testament. It was the angel of Jehovah that appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and went before Israel in the pillar of cloud or fire, and brought them in to the promised land (Ex. 3:2; 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2; Isa. 63:9). Very important, in these prophecies of Zechariah, is the implication that the angel of Jehovah was now present with the returned exiles, as he had been with their fathers. Besides the angel of Jehovah, an interpreting angel ("the angel that talked with me") is in this prophecy distinguished from any other angels who may happen to appear in any of the visions. W. J. B.

**Satan.** Rather, *the accuser, or the adversary.* Joshua is seen in vision preparing to offer an expiatory sacrifice on behalf of the people in discharge of his duty as high priest. But an adversary intervenes, who, as usual in the case of an accuser, stands at the right hand of the accused, and urges that he has incurred a ceremonial impurity which unfits him for his office of expiation. This charge is not expressly stated by the accuser, but may be inferred from the decision of the angel of Jehovah, who appears as an arbiter or judge. B. C.

The Bible record certainly seems to give the idea that there are two moral forces in the universe, and that the representative of the evil side of these forces is hostile to man, and

would work his ruin, if possible, while the good, as represented by God Himself, is favorable to man, and stands ready to help him in the ceaseless struggle. This idea is the important one in the thought or figure of a personal devil. A man should know that he is in as great moral peril all the time as though a personal spiritual adversary stood at his right hand, even when he is in the presence of the angel of the Lord, or of God Himself; and that therefore it is for him to resist evil suggestions and influences vigorously, and to triumph over them through faith filled battling. H. C. T.—No one who accepts the authority of our Lord can well deny the existence and activity of a malignant spirit, who would fain make the most of men's sins, and use them as a means of separating their doers from God. That is the conception here. A. M.

2. *And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee.* The Logos, or Son of God, said unto Satan, "The Lord," even God the Father, "rebuke thee," and not suffer thy mischievous imagination against Jerusalem and the temple to prosper: he, that hath chosen that place for his especial residence. This text seems parallel with Gen. 19: 24, where it is said, "The Lord rained fire from the Lord out of heaven:" a text alleged by both ancient and modern writers, to prove that a distinction of persons in the blessed Trinity was a doctrine delivered, though but imperfectly, in the Old Testament. W. Louth.

*Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* Is not this small remnant returned from captivity, miraculously rescued from utter destruction, like "a brand plucked out of the fire?" And can it be thought that God will not preserve them? (Cf. Amos 4: 11; Jude, verse 23.) W. Louth.

He who in verse 1 is called "the angel of the Lord," is here "the Lord," "Jehovah." So also in the phrase "The Lord rebuke thee," "Jehovah" is the word for "Lord," showing that this term is applied interchangeably to both the Father and the Son. The clause, "The Lord rebuke thee," is repeated, both for the greater emphasis, and in order to connect with it the consolatory words—He, the same that has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes thee. The term "choose" here, as in 1: 17 and 2: 12, implies God's special love for Jerusalem as representing His own people. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" implies that after the fires of utter destruction were already kindled upon her, the Lord plucked her out and extinguished the fires. Having done so much to

save her, and at such personal risk, would the Lord give her up to Satan now? H. C.

3. *Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments.* What is meant by the "filthy garments" is evident from what is said by the Lord in the next verse, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." It is no other than the stain of moral pollution, which is in some degree found in every man, though done away by the grace of God in Christ. And it is in this respect that it is said (Isa. 64: 6), "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." This makes us unworthy in ourselves to appear in the presence of a God of purity, and this afforded the adversary his ground of objection against Joshua. *Blayney.*

3, 4. The Mosaic law prescribed the priest's garments very minutely, and made great account of them as indicative of the moral purity requisite in those who came before God. Here the filthy garments represent the sins of the people, and their long and guilty wanderings from God into idolatry in past time, from which they were only now returning. He stood before the Divine angel who, in verse 4, pardons sin. This Divine personage says to his attendant angels: "Take those filthy garments away;" and to Joshua, "See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with festive garments," such as the priests should wear on holy days. This removing of his sin is a representative thing, its import being, not that the Lord forgives his personal sin, but rather the sins of the people, and practically reinaugurates the functions of the priesthood. H. C.

Of special significance is the position of Satan with respect to the covenant people. This is shown with particular clearness in Zech. 3, while it is also briefly alluded to 1 Chron. 21. The vision in Zechariah is as follows: Joshua, the high-priest, stands in unclean garments before the angel of the Lord, and Satan stands at His right hand to accuse him. The Lord repels with threats the accusations of Satan, acquits the high-priest, and commands him, as a token of his acquittal, to put on clean festal garments. The high priest is the representative of the people. He is accused before the Lord, not on account of his own sins as an individual, but in his capacity of high-priest. His priestly garments are defiled. Satan affirms that for this sinful people there is no valid mediation before God; that Israel is rejected because there is no longer an atonement for them. The Lord will, however, have pity, ac-

cording to verse 2, on this brand plucked from the fire, the remnant of His people, and will not regard their sin. He therefore causes the high-priest to be clothed in clean garments, thus acknowledging the validity of the high-priestly mediation, though with an intimation (verse 8) that the perfect atonement for the people is to be effected only by the Messiah. Thus the work of Satan is to question the forgiveness, the justification of the Church, in which sense he is called (Rev. 12:10), "the accuser of our brethren." Hence he is here represented as the opposite of the angel of the Lord, who, according to Zech. 1:12 (like the high-priest on earth), stands before the Lord to intercede for the people. *Oehler*.

4, 5. Note that Joshua's guilt as the representative of the people is not denied, but tacitly admitted and actually spoken of in verse 4. Why, then, does not the accuser have his way? For two reasons. God has chosen Jerusalem. His great purpose, the fruit of His undeserved mercy, is not to be turned aside by man's sins. The thought is the same as that of Jeremiah: "If heaven above can be measured, . . . then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done" (Jer. 31:37). Again, the fact that Joshua was "a brand plucked from the burning"—that is, that the people whom he represented had been brought unconsumed from the furnace of captivity—is a reason with God for continuing to extend His favor, though they have sinned. God's past mercies are a motive with Him. He *has*, therefore He *will*. Creatural love is limited, and too often says, I have forgiven so often that I am wearied, and can do it no more. We often come to the end of our long suffering a good many numbers short of the four hundred and ninety a day which Christ prescribes. But God never does. True, Joshua and his people have sinned, and that since their restoration, and Satan had a good argument in pointing to these transgressions; but God does not say, "I will put back the half burned brand in the fire again, since the evil is not burned out of it," but forgives again, because He has forgiven before. The sentence is followed by the change of the filthy garments, symbolical of sin, for the full array of the high priest. Ministering angels are dimly seen in the background, and are summoned to uncliothe and clothe Joshua. A. M.

The Lord will not only help us in our battling with the Tempter, He will also forgive us for having yielded to temptations, and will cleanse us from all our sins. Instead of the

rags that indicate our helpless dependence, we shall be given rich apparel, as the clothing of those who have triumphed through the aid of our Divine Friend. We need have no fear in the conflict, however severe it may be; for victory is sure, through faith in Him who is mighty to save. H. C. T.

Thus those whom Christ makes spiritual priests are clothed with the spotless robe of His righteousness, and appear before God in that; and with the graces of His Spirit, which are ornaments to them. The righteousness of saints, both imputed and implanted, is the "fine linen, clean and white," of Rev. 19:8. H.

7. The essential meaning of the verse is clear: "If thou art both obedient and faithful, thou shalt be established in the priesthood, thy services shall be accepted before Me, and thou shalt have ministering angels to lead and aid thee in thy work." H. C.—He must walk in God's ways, he must live a good life, and be holy in all manner of conversation; he must go before the people in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also keep God's charge, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood. He must take heed to himself, and to all the flock (Acts 20:28). Good ministers must be good Christians; yet that is not enough, they have a trust committed to them, they are charged with it, and they must keep it with all possible care, that they may give up their account of it with joy. H.

8. **The Branch.** There is no article in the Hebrew, but "Branch" is used as if it were a proper name. The reference is distinct to the promise made in Jer. 33:14-26; 23:5-8; Isa. 4:2, that Jehovah would raise up to David a righteous Branch, and would perpetuate forever the throne of David and the ministrations of the priests and Levites. W. J. B.

The word "Branch" should not carry our thought to a branch in the sense of *limb*, as one among many on the same tree, but to the one shoot which springs up from the root, and which, though small at first, becomes a tree of wonderful qualities. The word seems to be chosen because it well expresses the humble origin of the Messiah and the small beginnings of His work, and also His descent from the stock of David as to His human nature. It occurs as a name for the Messiah in Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 6:12. "My servant" is also a well-known designation of the Messiah, occurring Isa. 42:1; 49:3, 5, 6; 52:13; 53:11. The earliest Jewish expositors known to us interpret this passage of the Messiah.

The Chaldean paraphrase (older than the Christian era) reads it: "Behold, I bring My servant the Messiah, who will be revealed." II. C.

The same person must needs be intended here as is spoken of under the same title Jer. 23: 5; nor can terms so magnificent as those used in the latter place more especially be applicable to any one of less consequence than the great Messiah Himself, through whom alone iniquity is put away and the reign of perfect peace and righteousness is to be established. *Blayney.*

9. *The stone.* It removes most of the obscurities with which the interpretation of this verse is loaded, if we suppose that the stone here mentioned is the same with the "stone of lead," the plummet of Zech. 4: 10—a small plummet weight, of lead or tin, with seven eyes engraved upon it. The plummet stone itself is an emblem of building, and the seven eyes engraved upon it are said in Zech. 4: 10 to be an emblem of Jehovah's omnipresent watchfulness. It is an appropriate emblem, to be handed in turn to these two chiefs of the temple builders, Joshua and Zerubbabel. In our verse the angel places the plummet weight before Joshua as an emblem, saying as he does so, "Behold the stone that I place before Joshua, upon one stone seven eyes; behold I engrave the graving of it." The meaning is: The engraving on it is My emblem, and it shall prove a true emblem of My forgiving watchfulness. W. J. B.

*Upon one stone shall be seven eyes.* To show My watchful providence over this and all other places devoted to My service; and withal the wisdom and other graces which shall be eminent in the Messiah, the chief corner-stone of all the mystical churches of God. The eye is the emblem of Providence; the number seven denotes perfection. *Dr. Stokes.*

"I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." Jesus Christ has "once for all" made atonement, as the Epistle to the Hebrews so often says. The better Joshua by one offering has taken away sin. "The breadth of thy land, O Immanuel," stretched far beyond the narrow bounds which Zechariah knew for Israel's territory. It includes the whole world. As has been beautifully said, "that one day is the day of Golgotha."

10. The vision closes with a picture of the felicity of Messianic times, which recalls the description of the golden age of Solomon, when "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (I K. 4: 25). In like manner the nation, cleansed, restored to its priestly privilege of free access to God by the Messiah who comes with the fulness of the Spirit, shall dwell in safety, and shall be knit together by friendship, and unenvyingly shall each share his good with all others, recognizing in every man a neighbor, and gladly welcoming him to partake of all the blessings which the true Solomon has brought to his house and heart. A. M.

In that future day, when the Messiah shall be revealed, "the iniquity of His people be taken away in one day," and their spiritual discipline be made effective to their sanctification, there will be superabounding joy and blessedness, beautifully represented here by the common Jewish conception of reposing in peace and in love under the vine and the fig tree. The last words of the verse, "under the vine and under the fig tree," are given here as the very language of the call. Every man shall cry to his neighbor, "Ho! under the vine and under the fig tree;" come and let us have peace and rest, enjoying the gifts of our bountiful God! II. C.

## FIFTH VISION: THE CANDLESTICK SUPPLIED BY OLIVE TREES.

### CHAP. 4.

4:1 AND the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have seen, and behold, a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps 3 thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side 4 thereof. And I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are 5 these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest 6 thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, 7 but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head stone with shoutings of 8, 9 Grace, grace, unto it. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, The hands

of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house ; his hands shall also finish it ; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things ? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, even these seven, *which are the eyes of the Lord* ; they run to and fro through the whole earth. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof ? And I answered the second time, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches, which are beside the two golden spouts, that empty the golden oil out of themselves ? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be ? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two sons of oil, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

**Chap. 4.** In this chapter the prophet is called upon to contemplate a fifth vision of the most sublime and mysterious import. He sees a candlestick of pure gold, with its seven lamps communicating by seven pipes with a bowl at the top, which serves for a reservoir, and is constantly supplied with oil from two olive trees, standing one on each side of the candlestick. *Blayney.*—The vision of the golden candlestick and of the two olive trees, related and explained to signify the completion of the temple by Zerubbabel, supported by the high-priest, and with the sanction and help of Jehovah. B. C.—This chapter is another complete vision, having one set of symbols, illustrating one leading truth—viz., that the only perpetual fountain of power for spiritual life and labor is in God, and reaches man through His Spirit. H. C.

The chapter divides itself into four parts. The first part (verses 1-6 *a*) is descriptive. The second part (verses 6 *b*, 7) is a message stating the great truth and the comforting promise principally set forth in the vision. The third part (verses 8-10) is a second message, repeating the promise, and connecting it with the emblem of the plummet stone already introduced in the previous vision. The fourth part (verses 11-14) resumes the description, which had been left incomplete in the first part. In thus dividing the description of what the prophet saw in his vision, and inserting the prophetic message between the two parts, this account differs from those of all the other visions. In the others, the prophetic message, if there is one, follows the description.

*What the Prophet Saw in his Vision.* In the centre was a golden lampstand, bearing a general resemblance to the one made for the tabernacle, or those made for Solomon's Temple. At the top was a "bowl," or oil reservoir. On each of the seven branches of the lampstand was a lamp, and each lamp was connected with the reservoir by seven pipes. An olive tree was standing on each side, with its branches extending over the lampstand. The proximity

of the trees to the reservoir is especially noted in verse 3. So much the prophet noticed, and then asked for an explanation, and received one. The explanation given did not make him see that the two olive trees were as significant as they ought to be, and so he inquired specifically concerning them (verse 11). In the act of inquiring, apparently, his attention was directed to something that he had not noticed before ; for without waiting for a reply, he asks a fresh question in regard to this new phenomenon. On each olive tree there is a remarkable formation, like an ear of grain (for that is the probable meaning of the word translated "olive branches" in verse 12), and by the side of each of these is a golden spout, and the two golden spouts are emptying out liquid gold ; emptying it, apparently, into the reservoir of the lampstand. Notice the changes in verse 12 in the Revised Version. W. J. B.

**2, 3.** In this vision the symbols and their meaning are plain. Christians are the lights of the world. Churches are candlesticks, and their members luminous bodies, candles or lamps, revealing light concerning God in this otherwise very dark world. H. C.

**6, 7. The First Message.** This is given in three couplets of verse, and is more graphic if presented in that form to the eye :

"Not by power, and not by strength,  
But by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.

"Who art thou, O great mountain ?  
Before Zerubbabel [thou becomest] table land.

"And he shall bring out the chief stone,  
With uplifted shouts, Grace, grace to it."

Here notice five things : First, this vision is especially for Zerubbabel the prince, as the previous one was especially for Joshua the high-priest. Second, the two are carefully kept together in thought ; the promise of the Branch, fulfilled in Zerubbabel, being referred to in the vision concerning Joshua, and the golden candlestick, a strong priestly symbol, appearing in the vision concerning Zerubbabel. Third, the vision has reference to the temple building

by Zerubbabel, and a promise is made that he shall be enabled to bring the work to completion. Fourth, it is a time of mountain like discouragements. Fifth, the true source of encouragement is in Jehovah's Spirit and not in anything finite. The Spirit can reduce mountains to plains. This last is the principal point in the message. W. J. B.

6. This verse contains the Divine explanation of the vision by the interpreting angel, proving that its direct purpose was to encourage Zerubbabel not to trust in the arm of flesh, but in the Spirit of Jehovah as manifested in the providential ordering of the world. The golden candlestick of the vision is the restored Church, once more offering holy worship in the restored temple, and drawing its supplies of grace through the two olive branches, which represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the temporal and spiritual rulers of the Jews. *Not by might*—i.e., shall the temple be finished. The omission of the verb is characteristic of Zechariah's style. (Cf. verse 7.) B. C.

**Not by might.** The Hebrew word is one very widely used. The English word "power" is much more flexible to its various uses than is the word "might." A power may be an army, and this translation is given in the margin; but it hardly fits. The Hebrew word is often used to denote wealth, which is a notable form of power; and that meaning would here fit better. But it is better still to regard the word here as generic in its meaning, denoting every form of merely human power. And as with this word, so with the filling out of the ellipsis in the statement. We get a good sense if we fill it out specifically, making the meaning to be that the building of the temple will be accomplished by God's Spirit, and not by mere human power. But probably the true meaning is generic. Then the first of the three couplets affirms that all achievements for God are accomplished, not by human power, but by His Spirit; the second couplet implies that this is true in the case of Zerubbabel, as in other cases; and the third implies that it is true of his temple-building work. *My Spirit.* The doctrine of the Holy Ghost as one of the three persons of the Divine Trinity is not completely taught in the Old Testament; but parts of this doctrine are there taught with great fulness and clearness. So far as it goes, the doctrine of the Spirit in His relations to the builders of the second temple (Hag. 2:5; Zech. 4:6; 6:8; 7:12) is essentially the same with the doctrine found in the New Testament. W. J. B.

These symbols, interpreted into literal lan-

guage, amount to this word which the Lord sends to Zerubbabel, then the governor of Judah, and in charge of the great work then present and pressing—the rebuilding of the temple: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." The work upon which you labor seems to you very difficult—often, perhaps, too great for your resources; but know that success is not by any human power alone, but by the Spirit of God. This Spirit supplies the oil that feeds the lamps. Christian souls and religious institutions correspond to the lamps and to the machinery which supplies them; but the living fountain of oil is of the Lord alone by His Spirit. This is the precious doctrine of the New Testament as well as of the Old. Paul loved to say, man may labor, "God alone giveth the increase." (See 1 Cor. 3:5-9.) H. C.

In the visions of Zech. 4 and Rev. 1 the candlestick is the symbol of a congregation enlightened by God; and when, in the vision of Zechariah, the candlestick is filled with oil without the act of man, the idea expressed is, as is said in verse 6, that all the success and all the splendor of the congregation is not effected by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God. O.

Here God promises that the power of His Spirit will alone avail, and more than avail, for the preservation of His Church, although it may be destitute of other aid. Perfection is denoted by the seven lamps according to the ordinary and acknowledged use of the figure; as if God thus declared that nothing would be wanting for the full enlightenment of believers, who should seek it from its one and only source. The prophet, desiring to teach that what had been shown forth in this visible symbol would be fulfilled in the restoration of the Church, adds to the lamps seven pipes and two olive trees, from whence oil would continually flow, so that there was no fear of want or failure. Thus he signifies that God is possessed of a manifold abundance of blessings for the enrichment of the Church. *Cutlin.*

The prophet, in the fourth verse, asks for an explanation; and the first part of the text before us is that explanation. "This is the word of the Lord," says the angel unto him; "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit." "You see," he says, "those lights. No help of man is needed to keep them burning. No one takes to them their oil, or gives them their brightness. The olive trees do all for them. As long as they stand near the lamp and drop their oil into the bowl of it, that lamp will

shine on unaided. So with My Church, saith the Lord of Hosts. It needs not man's arm to save it. I may make use of man in saving it, but look there—I do not need him. My Spirit alone can accomplish all My pleasure. I can build My temple in your desolate city just as I brought your forefathers out of Egypt—by My own right hand and by My holy arm; just as I have now brought you out of Babylon—by My secret influence on the minds of men. I will build My glorious temple in My own glorious kingdom, not as you anticipate, by a visible putting forth of power and might, but by pouring secretly out on that rebellious world My grace and Spirit." C. B.

Their supreme lack was want of faith in a covenant-keeping God. How old the story is, and how familiar we are with it! God exposes and rebukes their unbelief. The prophet is reminded that the sure, ever adequate, and supreme source of the Church's power is not in the human instrument but in the Holy Spirit, that Divine personal presence who works in men, overcoming in His varied way all hindrance, and so glorifying human weakness that it becomes the sublime mastery of power. The lesson for us in this instructive vision is not far to find. Might and power—the visible and the pretentious—these always have had large command in the world, and whether employed in the Church or out of it, they have always furnished the world's protest to the spiritual in men and to the supreme in God. In the beginning the more perceptible agencies, those which could furnish the largest bulk and the greatest material display, were against the coming kingdom. It was so in the time of our Lord, so at Pentecost, so in the conflict of Christianity with paganism, so in the time of the Reformation, and in a manner so marked as to make the challenge formidable: it is so now. There is no disguising it—the whole body, not excepting the ministry, has become more or less infected with the dominant material spirit of the time. There is need that the thought and faith of the Church be lifted up from the material to the supreme source of power. If our vision be clear and true, the voice we shall hear to-day demanding the promptest, devotest attention of the Church, will be the voice of God, and the message this: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." *M. Rhodes.*

Ascribe nothing to instruments, either men or means. It is not of the will of man, nor another's will. Without the efficacious working of the Spirit, the Gospel itself is but as a dead

letter; the Spirit only quickens it. An instrument cannot act without the strength of an agent to manage it; the chisel forms the stone into a statue, but according to the skill and strength of the artificer moving it. It is not the breath of a man, and a few words out of his mouth, can produce so great a work as the new creation; this might be a reason why God chose so weak an instrument as man to preach the Gospel, to evidence that the great work was not from the weakness of man, but the power of God. *Charnock.*

Consciously, distinctly, resolutely, habitually, we need to give ourselves, our business, our interests, our families, our affections into the Spirit's hands, to lead and fashion us as He will. When we work with the current of that Divine will, all is vital, efficient, fruitful; for leaning back against the Omnipotent arm, this human frame attracts strength into all its sinews. But when we strive against that current, some secret flaw vitiates even what we call our successes; and how do we know but our proudest successes then are only failures in disguise? You have seen the rower's strength put vigorously against the tide; and, judging from his own narrow point on the water, the dash of his oars seemed to be dividing the waves, and sending him up the channel. But when the mist lifts, let him send his glance away to some stable landmark on the shore, and he finds the triumphant stream has all the time been drifting him backward and downward. So with the moral issue of our plans. By our conceited standards we seem to compass our ends; but transfer the scale of measurement to eternity, and behold! we have been losers of the soul while we gained the world, because the Spirit was not invited to befriend our toil! After the bolts are all driven and the shrouds are all set, we must still wait for the breath of heaven to fill the sail. Nothing, literally nothing, in the final reckoning, without our Lord! F. D. H.

It is getting to be a great hope of our time that society is going to slide into something better, by a course of natural progress; by the advance of education, by great public reforms, by courses of self-culture and philanthropic practice. We have a kind of new Gospel that corresponds; a Gospel which preaches not so much a faith in God's salvation as a faith in human nature; an attenuated moralizing Gospel that proposes development, not regeneration; showing men how to grow better, how to cultivate their amiable instincts, how to be rational in their own light and govern them



selves by their own power. Alas! that we are taken, or can be, with so great folly. How plain is it that no such gospel meets our want! What can it do for us but turn us away, more and more fatally, from that Gospel of the Son of God, which is our only hope. Man as a ruin, going after development, and progress, and philanthropy, and social culture, and, by this firely glimmer, to make a day of glory! And this is the doctrine that proposes shortly to restore society, to settle the passion, regenerate the affection, re-glorify the thought, fill the aspiration of a desiring and disjointed world! As if any being but God had power to grapple with these human disorders; as if man, or society, crazed and maddened by the demoniacal frenzy of sin, were going to rebuild the state of order, and reconstruct the shattered harmony of nature, by such kind of desultory counsel and unsteady application as it can manage to enforce in its own cause; going to do this miracle by its science, its compacts, and self-executed reforms! As soon will the desolations of Karnaë gather up their fragments and reconstruct the proportions out of which they have fallen. No, it is not progress, not reforms that are wanted as any principal thing. Nothing meets our case but to come unto God and be mediated in Him; to be born of God, and so, by His regenerative power, to be set in heaven's own order. He alone can rebuild the ruin, He alone set up the glorious temple of the mind; and those Divine affinities in us that raven with immortal hunger—He alone can satisfy them in the bestowment of Himself. *H. Bushnell.*

7. *O great mountain?* A metaphor signifying the obstacles which had delayed the rebuilding of the temple. These were now to disappear before the face of Zerubbabel, until the top stone of the building had been brought forth with great rejoicings. (Cf. Ezra 6:15-22.) B. C.

The expression is highly poetic. Reduced to a prose form, it would be: Though the difficulties in Zerubbabel's way seem insurmountable as mountains, they shall be made like a plain. If the overcoming energy were human, the case might be different; but as opposed to the infinite power of the Divine Spirit, mountains count for no more than pebbles. **Head-stone.** The stone that for some reason is regarded as the principal stone in the completed building, very likely the topmost stone, the laying of which completes the building. In any case, the completing of the building is the thing made prominent in the couplet. **Grace unto**

**II.** Words shouted in joy in celebration of the finishing of the structure; perhaps primarily a prayer for Divine favor upon it. W. J. B.

Obstacles, high and strong as great mountains, may seem to block the prosecution of this work; but say in the hearing of your governor, "Who art thou, great mountain," that thou shouldst think to withstand this work of God? "Before Zerubbabel become thou a plain!"—a summons to the great mountain of difficulty and opposition to lie low before the Lord's servant, and cease to retard his efforts. The crowning top stone would be put on with praise to Divine grace for the effective power which had carried the work through to its final consummation. H. C.

Grace, grace; that is the burden of the triumphant songs which the Church sings. It may be taken: 1. As magnifying free grace, and giving to that all the glory of what is done; when the work is finished it must be thankfully acknowledged that it was not by any policy or power of our own that it was brought to perfection, but that it was grace that did it—God's good will toward us, and His good work in us and for us. Grace, grace, must be cried, not only to the head stone, but to the foundation stone, the corner stone, and indeed to every stone in God's building; from first to last it is nothing of works, but all of grace, and all our crowns must be cast at the feet of free grace. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us. 2. As depending upon free grace, and desiring the continuance of it for what is yet to be done. Grace, grace, is the language of prayer as well as of praise; now that this building is finished, all happiness attend it! Peace be within its walls, and in order to that, grace. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon it! What comes from the grace of God may, in faith, and upon good grounds, be committed to the grace of God, for God will not forsake the work of His own hands. H.

"The sons of God," we are told, "shouted for joy" at the creation of our world. Ezra tells us that the people "shouted aloud for joy" when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. "They shall rejoice," says the prophet in this chapter, "as they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel." The progress of the building shall give them pleasure; what then its completion? If there were songs among the angels when the Lord first entered the world in a lowly disguise to save His Church in it, how will they sing when its salvation is accomplished? If there is joy now in heaven over a sinner that

repenteth, over one poorchild of the dust shedding the tear of bitterness in humiliation and pollution, oh, what will be the joy in heaven over ten thousand times ten thousand sinners, raised far above all pollution and humiliation, standing before the very throne of Jehovah, with not a sin left among them all, nor a stain nor a tear? And those sinners themselves—what must they feel and what must they say? There are moments when even on earth we do not know what to feel or say. Our sense of God's mercy toward us is so great that it well-nigh overpowers us. All that comes from us is some abrupt exclamation of joy and praise, and that repeated again and again. The text says that something like this shall take place in heaven. Our songs there, it intimates, will be no cold, artificial praises. They will come gushing out from hearts that are overflowing. They will be "shoutings," shoutings of "Grace, grace." Now and then for a moment wisdom and power may be our song as they were on earth, but this will not last long; we shall feel that we owe more to grace than to anything else, and all the splendor, and happiness, and employments of heaven will not keep grace from our thoughts. It was of goodness and mercy that the Jews sang, when they shouted for joy at the foundation of their temple; it will be of the same mercy that we shall sing when we sing in heaven. C. B.

**8, 9.** This message translates into literal language the symbols of the vision (verses 2, 3, 11-14), and the strong poetic imagery of verse 7. Through mercy and help from God, Zerubbabel shall finish the building of the temple, and the people shall know, when they experience this fulfilment, that the Lord has truly sent His prophet to them. H. C.

**10.** The question, *who hath despised the day of small things?* implies this answer: God will not despise the day of small things—viz., the still unfinished temple and feeble temporal power of the returned Jews. His providential care, typified by the seven eyes, shall overlook the work of restoration and rejoice in it. *Run to and fro* implies God's perfect oversight of the whole earth. *His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* B. C.

Here is an additional word to those who have been greatly discouraged in the rebuilding of the temple and painfully impressed by its insignificance, compared with the greatness and splendor of the former one. I translate, "For who have despised the day of small things? Let them rejoice when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel: those seven

—the eyes of the Lord are they, ranging through all the earth." The words "those seven" are somewhat abrupt, but manifestly refer to the passage (3:9), "Upon one stone are seven eyes;" and they are immediately explained to be the eyes of the Lord, which never fail to see any of the least possible things in all the earth. They traverse the universe, and take cognizance of everything. Let the disheartened dismiss their despondency when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel for laying out this temple work, and especially when they consider that the perfect eye of the All-seeing One is upon him, and that His universal, almighty agency guarantees the execution of this work. H. C.

Zerubbabel does his part, does as much as man can do to forward the work, but it is with those seven, those seven eyes of the Lord, which we read of chap. 3:9. He could do nothing if the watchful, powerful, gracious providence of God did not go before him and go along with him in it. Except the Lord had built this house, Zerubbabel and the rest had labored in vain. These eyes of the Lord are they that take cognizance of all the creatures and all their actions, and inspire and direct all, according to the Divine counsels. We must not think that God is so taken up with the affairs of His Church as to neglect the world; but it is a comfort to us that the same all-wise, almighty Providence that governs the nations of the earth is in a particular manner conversant about the Church. Those seven eyes that run through the earth are all upon the stone that Zerubbabel is laying straight with his plummet, to see that it be well laid. And those that have the plummet in their hand must look up to those eyes of the Lord, must have a constant regard to Divine Providence, and act in dependence upon its guidance, in submission to its disposals. In God's work the day of small things is not to be despised. Though the instruments be weak and unlikely, God often chooses such, by them to bring about great things. As a great mountain becomes a plain before Him, when He pleases, so a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands comes to fill the earth (Dan. 2:35). Though the beginnings be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase; a grain of mustard seed may become a great tree. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and will be the day of great things. H.

There are people who would do great acts;

but because they wait for great opportunities life passes, and the acts of love are not done at all. Observe, the considerateness of Christ *was shown in little things*. And such are the parts of human life. Opportunities for doing *greatly* seldom occur; life is made up of infinitesimals. If you compute the sum of happiness in any given day you will find that it was composed of small attentions, kind looks, which made the heart swell, and stirred into health that sour, rancid film of misanthropy which is apt to coagulate on the stream of our inward life, as surely as we live in heart apart from our fellow-creatures. *F. W. Robertson.*

The constant dropping of God's little goodnesses seems designed not so much for their own sakes, but like the constant dropping of the rain, that they may be to us a kind of heavenly fertility, soaking in at the soul's pores, and sinking down around the roots of our manly Christian purposes, nourishing those purposes, becoming absorbed into them, and so quickening them, and building them up, and pushing them on to fructification. The little tests that are given to our temper, to our faith, to our affection, to our consecration, are more efficacious than the larger and more imposing ones. They take us when we are off our guard, and so, with more accuracy than *great afflictions*, betray the real quality of the man. And it is exactly these petty stresses of character and the ignominious irritations—that are without power to rouse us to constrained heroism—that really we need to give most conscientious heed to and yield most punctilious respect to, for it is these exactly that can best tell us the thing about ourselves that we most need to know, and that touch us at the point of our most exceeding need.

There is a great deal that renders difficult the patient continuance in doing little Christian duties and rendering inconspicuous Christian services without fits and starts and with no recess or vacation. There is nothing specially exhilarating about doing a little thing with no prospect before us but to do another little thing similar to it when that first little one is finished. We are helped always by great occasions. But along our lowly lines of continuous small doing we do not encounter many great occasions. We do not get nerved and fired; circumstances do not work in us with strong inspiring. Perhaps we are teaching a class in the Sunday-school, perhaps we are helping a poor family, perhaps we are ministering to a sick friend, perhaps we are trying to preach the Gospel of Christ over and over in a com-

monplace way; but in it all we only go on adding little service to little service, forgetting, or perhaps even without the power to appreciate what continuance in well-doing really means, either in its cumulative results or in the thoughts and estimate of God. *C. H. P.*

The grand maxim of Christ's mission was that the humblest spheres give the greatest weight and dignity to principles. Rightly viewed, there are no small occasions in this world, as in our haste we too often think. Great principles, principles sacred even to God, are at stake in every moment of life. *H. B.*

Do little things as if they were great, because of the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ who dwells in thee; and do great things as if they were little and easy, because of His omnipotence. *Pascal.*—The man who does his duty acts nobly, honestly, uprightly, in a great position, has all that is best in him developed—he is ennobled. And so it is with the man who acts in the same way in a lesser position. The two men live in altogether different spheres. And yet the results, the spiritual and moral effects, are the same. *Oyle.*

If there be one thing on earth which is truly admirable, it is to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers, where they have been honestly, truly and zealously cultivated. *Arnold.*—We cannot tell what immense issues may depend on our public and our private duties. Each of us is bound to make the small circle in which he lives better and happier; each of us is bound to see that out of that small circle the wisest good may flow; each of us may have fixed to his mind the thought that out of a single household may flow influences which shall stimulate the whole commonwealth and the whole civilized world. The long life of a venerable pastor or a good layman, spent chiefly in preaching the Gospel and doing good, though it seems to be nothing at the time, yet, in the fragrance which it leaves behind, is a memory as lasting as the Pyramids. *Stanley.*

With the exception of some few striking passages, or great and critical occasions—perhaps not more than five or six in all—your life is made up of common, and as men are wont to judge, unimportant things. But yet, at the end, you have done up an amazing work, and fixed an amazing result. You stand at the bar of God, and look back on a life made up of small things, but yet a life how momentous, for good or evil! *H. Bushnell.*

If you will study the history of Christ's ministry from baptism to ascension, you will discover that it is mostly made up of *little words*.

*little deeds, little prayers, little sympathies*, adding themselves together in unwaried succession. The Gospel is full of Divine attempts to help and heal, in body, mind and heart, individual men. The completed beauty of Christ's life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; going far up into the north country to talk with the Syrophenician woman; showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart, that kept him out of the kingdom of heaven; shedding a tear at the grave of Lazarus; teaching a little knot of followers how to pray; preaching the Gospel one Sunday afternoon to two disciples going out to Emmaus; kindling a fire and broiling fish that His disciples might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of God's interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute.

I know not how better we can do than bring to our encouragement and re-enforcement the incentives of Christ's example and words, who ever recommended to His followers to speak the little word that came next to be spoken, to render the little service that came nearest their hand, and carry the little burden that lay immediately at their feet; the alabaster cruse of ointment poured upon the Lord's head, the cup of cold water offered to the thirsty disciple, the tear shed in sympathy, the mite dropped into the treasury. Each little moment comes freighted with its little Christian obligation and little Christian opportunity. A life grandly holy is only the adding together of minutes scrupulously holy. "He that is faithful in that which is least, *is* faithful also in much;" and then when the suitable time comes, it will be said to us: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things." C. H. P.

*The Vision as Illustrating the Messages.* The first message is introduced by the statement, "This is the word of Jehovah with regard to Zerubbabel" (verse 6). In other words, the word as given in the messages is simply a repeating of the word as seen in the objects. Zerubbabel and his fellows had a work to do for God, and they were painfully conscious of the meagreness of their resources, and the greatness of the obstacles, and their own discouraged feelings. To give them heart, the prophet is

authorized to promise them, in jubilant words, that they shall be enabled to complete their enterprise—to promise this in the name of the omnipresent Jehovah, who has sent them His angel, and whose Spirit is among them. He makes the promise in such terms as to remind them that the Divine resources are measureless. How is all this illustrated in what the prophet saw? The answer seems obvious. Central in the vision is the golden lampstand, with its lamps, which may well represent the Jewish Church of the period and its sacred work. Into the reservoir is pouring a steady and sufficient stream of that which is requisite to the performance of its functions. Where does the stream come from? Not from processes of human industry, but from the "sons of oil" rooted in earth on either hand. Etymologically, it is impossible that "sons of oil" shall mean "anointed ones." The idea is rather that of sources of oil supply. All the forces that are in attendance upon the Lord of the whole earth are available for helping those whom He chooses to help. His resources are various and abundant. They exist on the left hand as well as on the right. One tree would be enough, but there are two trees. One pipe to a lamp would be sufficient, but there are seven pipes. If He chooses, He can transcend nature, and accomplish without human hands the things that He ordinarily accomplishes through men. This is centrally the symbolism of the lesson. If you have a strong grasp of this you may add details consistent with it as your judgment or your fancy may dictate. If you have not this strong grasp of the central idea, symbolical details will only confuse you. W. J. B.

This, then, was the message for Zerubbabel and his people, that God would give such gifts as they needed in order that the light which He Himself had kindled should not be quenched. If the lamp was fed with oil it would burn, and there would be a temple for it to stand in. If we try to imagine the feebleness of the handful of discouraged men, and the ring of enemies round them, we may feel the sweetness of the promise which bade them not despond because they had little of what the world calls might. We all need the lesson; for the blustering world is apt to make us forget the true source of all real strength for holy service or for noble living. The world's power at its mightiest is weak, and the Church's true power, at her feeblest, is omnipotent, if only she grasps the strength which is hers, and takes the Spirit which is given. The eternal antithesis of man's weakness at his brightest, and God's

strength even in its feeblest possessors, is taught by that lamp flaming, whatever envious hands or howling storms may seek to quench it, because fed by oil from on high. Let us keep to God's strength, and not corrupt His oil with mixtures of foul smelling stuff of our own invention. Next, in the strength of that revelation of the source of might a defiant challenge is blown to the foe. The "great mountain" is primarily the frowning difficulties which lifted themselves against Zerubbabel's enterprise, and more widely the whole mass of worldly opposition encountered by God's servants in every age. It seems to bar all advance; but an un-

seen hand crushes it down, and flattens it out into a level, on which progress is easy. The Hebrew gives the suddenness and completeness of the transformation with great force; for the whole clause, "Thou shalt become a plain," is one word in the original. Such triumphant rising above difficulties is not presumption when it has been preceded by believing gaze on the source of strength. If we have taken to heart the former words of the prophet, we shall not be in danger of rash overconfidence, if we calmly front obstacles in the path of duty, assured that every mountain shall be made low. A. M.

#### SIXTH VISION: THE FLYING ROLL, CHAP. 5:1-4.

#### SEVENTH VISION: THE WOMAN IN THE EPHAH-JAR, CHAP. 5:5-11.

**5:1, 2** THEN again I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land: for every one that stealeth shall be purged out on the one side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be purged out on the other side according to it. I will cause it to go forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall abide in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

**5** Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is the ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance in all the land: (and behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead;) and this is a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is Wickedness; and he cast her down into the midst of the ephah: and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings; now they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build her an house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place.

**Chap. 5.** This chapter comprises two visions—a flying roll and a woman sitting in an ephah—both denoting the judgments of God on His chosen people, considered as having filled up the measure of their iniquities. II. C.

The visions represented in this chapter are of a very different kind from the preceding ones. Hitherto all has been consoling, and meant to cheer the hearts of the Jewish people by holding forth to them prospects of approaching prosperity. But lest they should grow presumptuous and careless of their conduct, it was thought proper to warn them of the conditions on which their happiness would depend; and to let them see that however God was at present disposed to show them favor,

His judgments would assuredly fall upon them with still greater weight than before, if they should again provoke Him by repeated wickedness. Accordingly in the first of these visions, which was the sixth in succession, the prophet is shown an immense roll of a book, like that which Ezekiel describes, chap. 2:9, 10, filled with curses, and in the act of flying, to denote the celerity and speed, as well as the certainty, with which the thief and false swearer, who might otherwise flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, would be visited to their utter destruction. The next vision presents the appearance of an ephah, or measure, in which sat a woman representing a nation, whose wickedness was arrived at such a height as required

an immediate cheek. Accordingly a heavy cover is cast upon her, and she is carried into exile in a distant land, there to abide the full time allotted for her punishment. *Blagney.*

**1, 2.** What it was that the prophet saw; he looked up into the air, and behold, a flying roll; a vast, large scroll of parchment which had been rolled up, and is therefore called a roll, was now unrolled and expanded; this roll was flying upon the wings of the wind, carried swiftly through the air in open view, as an eagle that shoots down upon her prey; it is a roll like Ezekiel's, that was written within and without, with lamentations, and mourning and woe (Ezek. 2:9, 10). **11.**

This roll is to be thought of as being the ancient form of book or *volume*, made of parchment or prepared skins; but immensely large, the dimensions being those of the porch in front of Solomon's Temple. (See 1 K. 6:3.) This correspondence cannot be supposed to be accidental. Hence we must conclude it was intended to intimate that this "fiery law" and its judgments come forth from their God, who dwelt in the Temple. That it was seen "flying," showed that it hastened to its work. **II. C.**

**3, 4.** How it was expounded to him. This flying roll is a curse; it contains a declaration of the righteous wrath of God against those sinners especially who by swearing affront God's majesty, or by stealing invade their neighbor's property. Let every Israelite rejoice in the blessings of his country with trembling; for if he swear, if he steal, if he live in any course of sin, he shall see them with his eyes, but shall not have the comfort of them, for against him the curse is gone forth. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked (Prov. 3:33). It shall not only beset his house, or lie at the door, but it shall remain in the midst of his house, and diffuse its malignant influence to all the parts of it. It shall be his constant companion at bed and board, to make both miserable to him. Unless he repent and reform there is no way to throw it out or cut off the entail of it. Nay, it shall so remain in it as to consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof. **II.**

This further explanation shows that this flying roll symbolizes the curse of the Almighty going forth over the earth for execution upon the guilty. The roll, like Ezekiel's, was written on both sides, and it would seem that the first table of the law was written on one side—the second on the other. The case of the false swearer represents all sins against the precepts

of the first table; the case of the thief, all sins against the second. According to the high behest of this law of God, now going forth to punish violations against itself, the thief is cut off according to the law written on one side; the swearer, according to the law written on the other. The Lord brings forth this flying roll, and causes it to enter the house of every sinner against the law of God. It abides there, and utterly consumes every vestige of his habitation—a terribly vivid representation of God's judgments upon all unpardoned sin! To think of the law itself as written out, and its written record then armed with power to search out every sinner, enter into his house and there consume everything—all his ill gotten wealth, the last crumb of his accumulated comforts, and finally himself—this surely must imply a ruin for the guilty from which there can be no escape, and in which there can be no alleviation.

#### *Seventh Vision.*

**5-8.** A new scene opens. The first apparent object is an ephah, the largest Hebrew dry measure, corresponding to the common corn-basket of our country, containing by one computation one and one ninth bushels, and by another one and one half. This is seen "going forth," as if this also, like the flying roll, was hastening to execute its mission. We shall probably best reach the sense of this symbol if we remember that the Scripture speaks of sinners as "filling up the measure" of their iniquities (Matt. 23:32; 1 Thess. 2:16). Here is the largest-sized measure. A woman sits in it, who is explained to represent or symbolize "*wickedness*"—the sins, or, yet more precisely, the *sinners* of the covenant people. The female person is a common symbol in the Scriptures for a city with its masses of people—*e.g.*, Babylon (Jer. 50:51; Rev. 16:19; 18:2-11). Jerusalem (Lam. 1:1 ff.). This woman, therefore, represents strictly the Jewish people apostate from God, having filled the measure of their iniquities, and now about to receive due retribution. She is first seen (verse 7) sitting in the midst of this large measure. Then he throws her down ("*he*" is God's minister of vengeance) into the midst or bottom of the vessel, and casts a weight of lead upon the mouth of the vessel, manifestly to hold her down and prevent her escape. The word rendered "talent"—*i.e.*, of lead, means a large round lump, probably large enough for its purpose—*i.e.*, to fill the mouth of the vessel. **II. C.**

He sees the woman thrust down into the

ephah, and a talent, or large weight of lead, cast upon the mouth of it, by which she is secured and made a close prisoner in the ephah, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to show that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners is: 1. Unavoidable, and what they cannot escape; they are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse, as this woman in the ephah. 2. It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under. Guilt is upon the sinner as a talent of lead, to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem's peace, Now they are hid from thine eyes, that threw a talent of lead upon them. II.

9-11. Two women (are they not angelic forms?)—two, because so large a burden required one on each side—come forth, the wind in their wings to indicate the most rapid motion; and they bear the ephah containing this woman far away into the land of Shinar (Babylon), to fix for it there a permanent abode. The main question here is, whether this is retrospective, looking back to the recent captivity in Babylon; or prospective, predicting some

future judgment on the covenant people. The latter view I accept: Because the other visions throughout this series are prophetic, not historic. Because the late captivity in Babylon was transient; this is at least very long. Because *that* always contemplated a restoration: this gives no hint of any restoration, but the contrary. Because in verse 4 the "curse that goeth forth" inflicts judgments more severe and exterminating than those in the captivity to Babylon. This vision of the ephah should correspond to that of the roll. There is no particular difficulty in applying this entire chapter to the judgments that fell on the Jewish nation for their rejection of their Messiah, according to their own imprecation—"His blood be on us and on our children!" The first instalment of this doom came from the Roman arms; the rest in the almost universal persecution, dispersion, and reproach under which they have suffered for ages. In this view of its prophetic significance, "Shinar" is used by way of historic allusion, another captivity, only more terrible and protracted. II. C.

#### EIGHTH VISION: THE FOUR CHARIOTS, CHAP. 6:1-8.

##### SYMBOLICAL TRANSACTION, CHAP. 6:9-15.

6:1 AND again I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there came four chariots out 2 from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first 3 chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; and in the third chariot 4 white horses; and in the fourth chariot grised bay horses. Then I answered and said unto 5 the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four winds of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord 6 of all the earth. *The chariot wherein are the black horses goeth forth toward the north country; and the white went forth after them; and the grised went forth toward the south 7 country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth; and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they 8 walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.* 9, 10 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah; and come thou the same day, and go into the house 11 of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, whither they are come from Babylon; yea, take of *them* silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, 12 the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall 13 build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; 14 and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the 15 temple of the Lord. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And *this* shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

**Chap. 6.** This chapter is in two quite distinct parts; the first a vision, and the second a symbolic transaction. The vision (verses 1-8) presents four chariots, and shows their mission. The symbolic transaction (verses 9-15) is the making of crowns and setting them on the head of Joshua, the high-priest, who becomes the type of the Messiah. II. C.

The main design and purport of the eighth and last vision, contained in the former part of this chapter, was to confirm the Jews in their faith and dependence upon God by showing them that, weak and defenceless as they seemed to be, they had nothing to fear from the greatest earthly powers while they remained under the Divine protection; since all those powers originally proceeded from the counsels of the Almighty, were the instruments of His providence, and could not subsist nor act but under His permission. *Blayney.*

**I.-8.** As the fifth chapter predicted judgments on the covenant people for their sins, this last vision predicts corresponding judgments on the enemies of God's people. The leading objects of vision here are four chariots drawn by diverse-colored horses, red, black, white and gray. They "come forth from between two mountains of brass" to denote the amazing strength of that power of which they were the representative agents. Like the horses seen in the first vision (I : 8-13), these chariots must be understood to represent, in pertinent symbols, these varied agencies of God's providential rule over nations by which He puts down one and sets up another, and in general administers the retributions of an actual government. The principal shade of difference between the horses and their riders of the first vision, and the chariots with their horses in this last, is that the horses with their riders serve rather as scouts; the chariots as executioners; the riders on horses explore the state of the nations; the chariots put in execution the mandates of Jehovah; or (nearer to the expressive language of the text) they convey the very *animus* of Jehovah—His spirit of indignation and retributive justice—and cause it to fall on those guilty nations. As the use of post horses in those vast Oriental kingdoms (Esth. 3 : 13 ; 8 : 10) suggested their use in the first vision, so here we may find a good reason for this symbolic use of the chariot in the prominent place held by chariots of war in the armies of that day. The explanation of the chariots (verse 5), "These are the four spirits or winds of the heavens," should not suggest to us the literal *winds*, nor any literal sense of the word *spirit*,

but, as already hinted, those invisible agencies of the Divine hand in providence which act upon the nations of the earth, in judgments especially, but in blessings also, as the case may be, constituting the working forces of an actual administration of the government of God over nations as such in the present world. These chariots "go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth," the usual attitude of servants awaiting their orders, and going forth, when bidden, to their execution. It will be noted that two of these chariots, that with black and that with white horses, go forth toward the north country, Babylon, where the enemies specially contemplated here were located. One chariot (verse 7) seems to have had a very general commission "to traverse the whole earth," implying that these agencies of God's reign over the nations are not restricted to any special district or to any one human kingdom, but embrace them all. In verse 8 we read, "Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted My spirit in the north country," which translation can be understood rightly in no other sense than that of *quieting* the spirit of God by executing His righteous indignation and giving scope to the retributions of justice. A less ambiguous rendering would be, "have brought My anger down upon the north country." This is doubtless the sense of the passage. The judgments of God fell on Babylon for her too cruel oppression of the covenant people. Darius, heading the Persian armies, was the first executioner of this wrath; the time, not long after this prophecy was revealed. The various color of the horses may have been slightly significant, yet some interpreters incline to make too much of it. It is manifestly one of the very subordinate and less important things in the vision. Plainly the revealing angel, or it may perhaps be said, the recording mind, made little account of this feature, else we should find more accuracy in the references to the different chariots. Thus we have at first four, designated by their horses, but the last span has a twofold description; they are gray, and also active, fleet, this being the only sense of the Hebrew word rendered "bay" (verses 3, 7). When they are named again, the red-colored disappear, and the chariot commissioned to traverse the whole earth is indicated (very appropriately) as that drawn by the active, fleet span. (The span that had the wide world for their range should be pre-eminently *fleet*.) Thus the red are dropped from view, and what was the fourth in the first description now becomes two. The twofold de-



scription given of its horses is divided, and we have two spans and two chariots out of the one. This criticism is chiefly valuable as showing that the color of the horses and the distinction of chariots is really in the eye of the revealing Spirit a small and not important matter. The vital points are more cared for, and are put with more accuracy. Of the two mountains, the material—"brass" or copper—denotes the strength, not of any heathen nation whose power God might use by overruling it, but of *God Himself*, in reference specially to the deep, immovable foundations of His throne. The location should be the supposed and indeed actual dwelling place of God—*i.e.*, among His people, in His temple at Jerusalem. As the chariots represent His providential agencies, going forth on their mission, so their headquarters and starting point should be the place of His abode. That they come forth from between two mountains is due simply to the necessities of chariot-driving in a mountainous country. They cannot run on the tops or sides of rugged mountains, but only in the valley, which will be between two mountains. H. C.

"The land of the north," to which the chariot with the black horses was seen going, is undoubtedly Babylonia. (Cf. 2:10, 11.) By this was indicated that on Babylon, the bitter and cruel enemy of Israel, heavy judgments were about to come. Following this chariot came that with white horses hastening to the same destination; to indicate the complete triumph which was to be obtained over the enemy that had ravaged the land and led captive the people of Israel. The chariot with the griseled or piebald horses was seen rushing to the land of the south—that is, toward Egypt (Dan. 2:5 ff.), also the enemy of Israel. Inasmuch, however, as Egypt had not oppressed and injured Israel as Babylon had, only one of the judgment chariots was seen going thither.

On the whole, the interpretation of Kimchi is to be preferred. By the judgments executed on the enemies and oppressors of His people satisfaction was rendered to God, His just anger was appeased, and His Spirit roused against them was quieted. The statement is in harmony with what He elsewhere says, "Ah, I will ease Me of Mine adversaries; I will avenge Me of Mine enemies" (Isa. 1:24).

This vision had reference primarily to the judgments with which God would visit those nations that had oppressed and wronged Israel. But there are here involved general truths which are for all times and for all places. One thing plainly taught here is, that all agencies

are under the Divine control, and operate only as God directs or permits. The forces and powers of nature, and the influences that affect the condition or determine the conduct of individuals and communities, are alike under His control. Nothing can happen except as He permits or appoints; and "if He cut off, and shut up or gather together, who can hinder Him?" (Job 11:10.)

We are reminded here also of the deep interest, the quick and living interest, which God takes in His people, His care for them, and His intense displeasure with all who injure and oppress them. Babylon and Egypt stand in the prophetic Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, as the types and emblems of the enemies of God's Church; and both in the Old Testament and the New, the Divine displeasure is emphatically expressed against those who are thus hostile to that cause which is dear to Him. Because of this trouble and calamity, desolation and ruin come upon peoples and upon dynasties. If the inner history of nations could be deciphered—if we could see all the minute relations of events as God sees them—we should in many cases discover that calamities which have come upon countries and kingdoms, and which the ordinary historian traces to this or that secondary cause, were in reality the outcome of Divine judgments on the oppressors or persecutors of God's people. W. L. A.

**9-15.** The series of visions is now closed, and we have here an actual transaction of a symbolical character. That this is not a vision, but is a real transaction, appears on the face of the record. It does not open with "I saw by night" (as 1:8); nor "I lifted up mine eyes and saw" (as 1:18); nor "I lifted up mine eyes again" (as 2:1); nor "he showed me" (as 3:1); nor as 4:1; 4:5; nor as 6:1—all which statements testify that the scenes that follow respectively were witnessed in prophetic vision. On the contrary, this is simply "The word of the Lord came unto me," as in 1:1; 7:1; 8:1, etc., where verbal communications are made. Moreover, here is not a presentation of things to be *seen* by the prophet, but a command respecting things to be *done*. And finally, these crowns, after being made and solemnly placed on the head of the high priest, were to be "laid up for a memorial in the temple of the Lord," all indicating things done in real life. The leading points are the preparation of crowns; the solemn coronation of the high priest; the accompanying announcement and explanations, showing that the purport of the

transaction was to make Joshua a special type of the Messiah, and to reveal vastly important truths respecting His person and relations to men; and finally, to indicate that Gentile nations were to participate in the services and the glories of His coming kingdom. This seems to have been a double crown, the word for crown being plural, the verb (verse 14) being in the singular; and manifestly but one head, that of Joshua, is crowned in the transaction. To obtain the silver and the gold for its construction, the prophet is directed to go to certain men here named, who are recently from Babylon, captive Jews, who remained behind when the first company of their brethren left, and who seem to have come to Jerusalem now with a contribution from their brethren still behind, to aid in building the temple. Josiah, son of Zephaniah, may have been the treasurer of this fund; hence the direction to go with the other three without delay to his house to draw the money. The original brings in the phrase, "who are come from Babylon," at the end of the verse, showing that Josiah, as well as the other three, was in the delegation from the captive Jews there. Having made the crowns, he sets them upon the head of Joshua, the high-priest, and then solemnly announces from the Lord, "Behold the man—Branch is his name; he shall branch" (shoot) "up from underneath himself" (from his own humble root), "and he shall build the temple of the Lord." As already indicated, the sense of the word rendered "Branch" is shoot, the single stock that springs from the root and becomes the one trunk of the tree. In the original the verb rendered "shall grow," is the same—*shall shoot up*. The specially emphatic declaration here is that this man—the Branch—"shall build the temple of the Lord." Hence this is solemnly repeated (verse 13): "Even He" (He alone, and He in distinction from all others) "shall build the temple of the Lord." This cannot refer to the temple then being built by Zerubbabel, for of this the Lord had explicitly declared (4:9), "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this house, and his hands shall also finish it." We must therefore look to another temple, which can be none other than that so often referred to in the New Testament, built by Jesus, the Messiah, of which it is said, "ye" (Christians) "are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16). "For the temple of God is holy, *which temple ye are*" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house," etc. (1 Pet. 2:5). The comprehensive idea embraces the spiritual kingdom of

the Messiah, of which the Jewish temple was an apposite symbol. In that ancient temple Jehovah dwelt, revealing His presence. So in this, the presence of the Holy Ghost reclaims men's hearts to God, and makes them pure before Him. Yet further: "He shall bear the glory"—*i.e.*, pre-eminent glory, becoming the "head of all things to His Church," "King of kings," moreover, and "Lord of lords," "He shall sit and rule upon His throne," truly a King, not in Zion alone, but over all the earth, or rather all the earth shall ultimately become His Zion, since His kingdom shall in the latter days embosom and absorb into itself all other kingdoms and all other love, obedience, and homage, so that it can be said truly, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He (alone) shall reign forever and ever." He shall also "be a priest upon His throne," uniting these two functions in His own person, and never ceasing to mediate for His people, and be their great atoning sacrifice because of His exaltation to so great power and glory on His throne. The phrase "the counsel of peace shall be between them both," does not refer to some second person other than the Messiah, co-operating with Him; nor does it mean merely that Messiah as King and Messiah as Priest shall be harmonious and not conflicting, but rather that both as King and as Priest, Messiah shall consult for and shall secure the peace, the highest spiritual good of His people. The full energy of both relations shall be made subservient to the spiritual life and consequent peace and blessedness of His children. After these crowns had served their temporary purpose in this typical inauguration of Joshua the high-priest, they were to be laid up in the temple of the Lord as a memorial for those four delegates who came up from afar, to indicate that people from afar shall come into the Christian Church. H. C.

11. By God's command, in the presence of witnesses, and for a memorial to them, He places a crown, or crowns, upon the head of Joshua the high-priest, thereby constituting him a type of Christ, "the Branch," whom He proclaims as about to come to build the spiritual temple of Jehovah and to preside over it both as King and Priest for the great purpose of peace. The accession of strangers to assist in building the temple is foretold, and given as a proof of the prophet's Divine mission. *Blaney*.

Of the tribute money brought by some of the returned exiles the prophet is bidden to make golden and silver crowns—the sign of kingship

—to set them on the high-priest's head, thus uniting the sacerdotal and regal offices, which had always been jealously separated in Israel. This singular action is explained by the words which he is commanded to speak, as being a symbolic prophecy of Him who is "the Branch"—the well-known name that older prophets had used for the Messiah—indicating that in Him was the reality which the priesthood shadowed, and the rule which was partly delegated to Israel's king as well as the power which should rear the true temple of God among men. A. M.

In Zechariah the Messiah distinctly appears as the future Redeemer of the people, and indeed as their atoning High-Priest. This is the case first in chap. 3, where the people are comforted by the statement that God will graciously accept the priesthood over which He presides, while in verse 8 sq. it is further declared that the true time of grace is still future; He, through whom the complete absolution of the people (and that on one day) is to be effected, must first appear. This future Atoner, to whom the present priesthood typically refers, is *the Branch*, the Son of David, the Messiah. Hence allusion is now made, verse 6: 9-15, by the symbolical action of crowning the high-priest Joshua with the double crown, to the union of the priestly and royal dignities in the person of the Messiah. O.

**12.** *Behold the man whose name is the Branch.* See in the person of Joshua the high-priest the type or representation of the Man whose "name is the Christ that shall be revealed," as the Targum paraphrases the text. W. Louth. —There cannot be a doubt that the same person is meant by "the Branch" here, who is so called (chap. 3: 8)—viz., the Messiah; of whom Joshua is made the type or representative by the crown placed on his head. The passage will not answer to any other but to Him who was at once both King and Priest, and, by uniting both characters in Himself, was completely qualified to bring about "the counsel of peace," or reconciliation between God and man. *He shall build the temple of the Lord.* The Church of Christ is expressly called "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3: 16; 2 Cor. 6: 16); "a spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2: 5), etc.

**13.** *Even He shall build the temple of the Lord.* This clause is highly emphatical; implying that "even He," the selfsame person, who should build the temple of Jehovah, *even* He should have the honor of governing and presiding in it, as both King and Priest, in both capacities advancing the peace and prosperity of His people. *And He shall bear the glory.*

That is, the honor and authority belonging to a sovereign or chief ruler. So when Moses was directed to give up his command and authority to Joshua, it is said, "And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him" (Num. 27: 20). And in this sense Christ was to "receive glory." (See Ps. 21: 5; Dan. 7: 14; Acts 3: 13; 5: 31; Phil. 2: 9-11; Heb. 2: 9.) He was to be exalted to the right hand of God, there to sit upon His throne as a King, governing His Church, and as a Priest making intercession continually for it. It is impossible not to see that this prophecy was completed in Christ, so as it never could be in any other person. *Blagney.*

*And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.* The kingdom and priesthood being united in the same person, there shall be no clashing of jurisdiction between the two offices. W. Louth.

**Priest on the throne.** The Old Testament ceremonial—temple, priesthood, sacrifice—was established for this along with other purposes, of being a shadow of things to come. Christ's office is not metaphorically illustrated by reference to the Jewish ritual; but the Jewish ritual is the metaphor, and Christ's office the reality. He *is* the priest. A. M.

The Mediator between God and man, the High-Priest in the spiritual temple, the King on the unseen throne, is this same Jesus who went in and out among us, whom we have seen sitting in the house at Bethany, or by the well at Sychem, receiving sinners, preaching to the poor, comforting His friends, and suffering little children to come to Him. With an acquaintance already formed, a confidence already secured, and a love already awakened, we can pass with a prepared heart to more abstruse revelations of the same Lord, when He is presented as the Righteousness of the sinful in the Epistle to the Romans, as the predestined Source of Life in the Epistle to the Ephesians, as the Sacrifice and Priest of the new covenant in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Having first known *Himself*, we are ready for the Spirit to take of *the things which are His* and show them to us. T. D. B.

Prophecy points to the prophetic, kingly and high-priestly office, and Jesus appears in the flesh that He may undertake this threefold office. Prophecy brings forward the manger, and Jesus suffers Himself to be laid therein by the Virgin Mary. Prophecy brings forward the cross, and Jesus permits Himself to be nailed thereon. Prophecy points to the kingly throne, and Jesus ascends it. Prophecy confesses the divinity of Jesus, and He makes Himself known as God. Prophecy acknowledges

His humanity, and He becomes man for us. Yea, Lord Jesu, Thou art none other than Thou wast! Thou wilt be none other than Thou art! The same yesterday, and to-day, and forever! *Caspars.*

The Gospel, the burden of which is "Christ and Him crucified," is God's grand plan of spiritual and providential government. Christ sits as "priest upon the throne," "the government is on His shoulders," everything is in His hands. Nature, in all her departments, belongs to the Messiah. The world has an interest in His redemption. He planted His cross upon our soil, and adapted the provisions of His Gospel to the ways of the world. But for the intervention of grace through Christ Jesus, we do not see but that upon the entrance of transgression, these heavens must have been wrapped together as a scroll, and have passed away with a terrible noise, and these elements must have melted with fervent heat. Upon no other principle can we understand how a kind Providence could shed down its favors upon individuals or nations. E. M.

15. They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord. Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that stayed behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that were returned, who wanted their help in building the temple. Now God promises that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in, and lend a helping hand to the building of the temple, and many hands would make light work. The kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple (Ezra 6 : 8) and the furnishing of it (Ezra 7 : 19, 20).

The accomplishment of this would be a strong confirmation of the truth of God's word, Ye shall know that the Lord of Hosts has sent Me unto you. That promise, that those that were afar off should come and assist them in building the temple of the Lord, was, as it were, the giving of them a sign; by this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due time; this should be fulfilled now very speedily; it was so; for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers, and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work went on, and was finished. (See Ezra 6 : 13, 14.) Now by this surprising assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah, who told them of it before, was sent of God, and

that therefore his word concerning the Man, the Branch, should be fulfilled.

These promises were strong obligations to obedience, "For this shall come to pass—you shall have help in building the temple, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves." The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. "You shall have the benefit and comfort of all these promises, if you make conscience of your duty." II.

Christ builds the temple (verse 13), and uses us as His servants in the work. Our prophecy was given to encourage faint-hearted toilers, not to supply an excuse for indolence. Beneath all our poor labors, and blessing them all, is the power of Christ. We may well work diligently who work in the line of His purposes, after the pattern of His labors, in the strength of His power, under the watchfulness of His eye. The little band may be few and feeble; let them not be fearful, for He, the throned priest, even *He*, and not they with their inadequate resources, shall build the temple. Christ builds on through all the ages, and the prophecy of our text is yet unfulfilled. Its fulfilment is the meaning and end of all history. See to it that you lend a hand and help to rear the true temple at which successive generations toil, and from whose unfinished glories they dying depart, but which shall be completed, because the true Builder "ever liveth" and is "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Above all, take heed that you are yourselves built in that temple. Trust your souls to Christ, and He will set you in the spiritual house, which the King greater than Solomon is building still.

In one of the mosques of Damascus, which has been a Christian church, and before that was a heathen temple, the portal bears, deep cut in Greek characters, the inscription, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." The confident words seem contradicted by the twelve centuries of Mohammedanism on which they have looked down. But, though their silent prophecy is unheeded and unheard by the worshippers below, it shall be proved true one day, and the crescent shall wane before the steady light of the Sun of Righteousness. The words are carven deep over the portals of the temple which Christ rears; and though men may not be able to read

them, and may not believe them if they do, though for centuries traffickers have defiled its courts, and base born usurpers have set up their petty thrones, yet the writing stands sure, a dumb witness against the transient lies, a patient prophet of the eternal truth. And when all false faiths, and their priests who have oppressed men and traduced God, have vanished ; and when kings that have prostituted their great and god-like office to personal advancement and dynastic ambition are forgotten ; and when every shrine reared for obscene and bloody rites, or for superficial and formal worship, has been cast to the ground, then from out of the confusion and desolation shall gleam the temple of God, which is the refuge of men, and on the one throne of the universe shall sit the Eternal Priest—our brother, Jesus the Christ. A. M.

## ZECHARIAH. CHAPTERS VII., VIII.

7 : 1 AND it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month, even in Chislev. Now *they* of Beth-el had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to intreat the favour of the LORD, *and* to speak unto the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many 4, 5 years ? Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me ? 6 And when ye eat, and when ye drink, do not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves ? 7 *Should ye not hear* the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited ? 8, 9 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus hath the LORD of hosts spoken, saying, Execute true judgement, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother : and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor ; and let 11 none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, 12 and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit by the hand of the former prophets : therefore came 13 there great wrath from the LORD of hosts. And it came to pass that, as he cried, and they 14 would not hear ; so they shall cry, and I will not hear, said the LORD of hosts : but I will scatter them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned : for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

8 : 1, 2 And the word of the LORD of hosts came *to me*, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts : I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great fury. 3 Thus saith the LORD : I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem : and Jerusalem shall be called The city of truth ; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts The 4 holy mountain. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : There shall yet old men and old women 5 dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And 6 the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in 7 those days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes ? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west 8 country : and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem ; and they 9 shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD 10 of hosts was laid, even the temple, that it might be built. For before those days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast ; neither was there any peace to him that went out or

11 came in because of the adversary : for I set all men every one against his neighbour. But now I will not be unto the remnant of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. For *there shall be* the seed of peace ; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew ; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. And it shall come to pass that, as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing : fear not, *but* let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts : As I thought to do evil unto you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not ; so again have I thought in these days to do good unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah : fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do ; Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbour ; execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates ; and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour ; and love no false oath : for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

18, 19 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts : The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts ; therefore love truth and peace. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come peoples, and the inhabitants of many cities : and the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to intreat the favour of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts : I will go also. Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to intreat the favour of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

**Chaps. 7, 8.** God's reply by Zechariah to the question respecting fasts. The moral law above the ceremonial. God's promises conditional on obedience to His precepts. Fasts will be changed into feasts. The coming in of the Gentiles to worship the God of the Jews. B. C.

This second portion of the Book of Zechariah consists of a discourse occasioned by a question put to the priests and prophets in the temple. It was spoken two years subsequently to the previous vision, and the question which it answered was, Were they, now that they had returned to Jerusalem, to keep the solemn days of fasting and humiliation, which had been instituted during the exile at Babylon ? This question he answered in the same spirit as Isaiah of old (chap. 58 : 3-7). They were not so to fast ; for true fasting consists in doing justice and mercy ; and it was because they had neglected these "weightier matters of the law" that they had been driven from their land. Let them keep justice and mercy, and then aged men and women supporting their steps with their staves shall once again dwell in their city, their streets shall be full of boys and girls at play, their temple shall be built, their land bear them bounteous crops, and they themselves, instead of being a curse, shall be a blessing to all people. If only they speak the truth, and execute judgment, and think no evil, and take no false oath, then their fasting days, "the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the

fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth," may all be kept as cheerful feasts. They may eat and drink, if they will ; only they must love truth and peace (8 : 16-19). R. P. S.

A considerable progress having by this time been made in the rebuilding of the temple, and affairs going on pretty smoothly, the hopes of the Jewish nation began to revive, and a deputation was sent to inquire of the priests and the prophets whether it was God's will that they should still continue to observe the fast which had been instituted on account of the city and the temple having been burned by the Chaldeans. To this the prophet is directed to reply : That this and another fast of the like kind, being of their own appointment, regarded themselves only and not God ; that what he required of them was the practice of moral righteousness, like as he had enjoined it to their fathers, who, disregarding his injunctions, had brought upon themselves and upon their country all the evil which they had recently experienced. Having thus accounted for God's past severity, the prophet (chap. 8) goes on to inform them that the anger of Jehovah was now appeased, and He was again disposed to be gracious unto His people and to restore Jerusalem. He exhorts them therefore to proceed vigorously with the building of the temple, and assures them that they would from that instant experience a happy revolution in their affairs. He renews his exhortation to the prac-

tive of moral goodness, and promises them on that condition their fasts should be turned into joyful feasts; and they should be so distinguished by the Divine favor that many nations would be eager to embrace their religion and sue for their alliance. *Blayne.*

**7:1.** *The fourth year of King Darius*—B.C. 518. Nearly two years had elapsed since the visions vouchsafed to Zechariah had been made known for the encouragement of the people. Meanwhile the work of restoration had progressed and Jerusalem had begun to wear somewhat of her former aspect. With returning prosperity and power it was only natural that a question should arise as to the propriety of retaining those services of humiliation, which had been instituted as memorials of the destruction of the city and temple. B. C.

**1-3.** The date is given precisely, this being a matter of historic importance. From the arrival of the first caravan of returning Jews in the first year of Cyrus (B.C. 536) to the second year of Darius (about B.C. 520), the people had been harassed by their Samaritan enemies; the work on the temple for a time dragged heavily, and was finally quite suspended. At length, under special messages from God by Haggai and Zechariah, it was resumed in the second year of Darius. With this resumption commenced an era of great prosperity. Their foreign enemies ceased to annoy them; the smiles of God rested on all their labors. After two years of such prosperity, the question naturally arose, whether they should continue to observe certain days of fasting, as they had done then some seventy years. The most prominent of these days are specially referred to here; that in the fifth month (verse 3), and that also in the seventh month (verse 5). Chap. 8:19 refers to two others—viz., one in the fourth month and another in the tenth. The history indicates the special reason of fasting on these days. In the fifth month the temple was burned (Jer. 52:12). In the seventh, Gedaliah was slain, and the small remnant that remained with him were scattered and destroyed (Jer. 41:1 ff.). In the fourth month the city was taken (Jer. 52:6, 7). In the tenth it was invested by the armed hosts of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:4). The people in the capacity of a worshipping congregation sent this commission to their priests and prophets with this inquiry. H. C.

**5, 6.** The sense of these two verses is much the same with that of Paul (1 Cor. 8:8)—viz., that eating or abstaining from meat is in its own nature indifferent; nor is it acceptable to God any further than it is subservient to the

true ends of religion. The prophet first reproves the hypocrisy of their fasts before he gives them a direct answer to the question proposed. This he does in chap. 8:19. *W. Louth.*

This rebuke manifestly applied to some of those who united in this inquiry. The Lord asks, Did your fasting have any regard to Me? Did you think of your sins against Me? Did you humble yourselves before Me? So, when ye ate and when ye drank, was it not *ye* that ate, and *ye* that drank? This is the literal rendering, and implies that they thought of nothing but their own gratification, ate and drank merely to enjoy themselves, and as if there were no God to thank, no great Giver to recognize as the fountain of all blessings. H. C.

To these men of Bethel, and through them to all formal worshippers God says: Why consult Me about these services? What have I to do with them? It was not Me you had in view, but yourselves, in performing them. If you like them, continue them. If they are a weariness to you, how much more to Me. So long as you merely wish to please yourselves, or to secure yourselves against some imagined danger, devise whatever services you think will best suit yourselves. When the worship of God becomes to us a mere duty the performance of which we feel incumbent upon us that we may not lose God's favor; when we enter upon it without heart, or even with some repugnance or distaste, God cannot recognize that as worship of Him, but only as the service of our own superstitious and ignorant self-seeking. We seek the company of our friends, not that we may ingratiate ourselves with them, but because we are happier there than elsewhere; such is the worship which God delights in. *Dods.*

**8-11.** A summary of the message sent by many of the prophets (verse 7) shortly before the Captivity; by Jeremiah and Zephaniah in the days of Josiah, and somewhat earlier by Hosea, Amos, Isaiah and Micah. This message refers to the ways of God toward the people, and of the people toward God in the age next preceding the time of Zechariah. That history was exceedingly full of most pertinent and valuable instruction. H. C.

**9, 10.** This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons which the former prophets preached to their fathers, because the very same things were required of them now. Thus does the Lord of Hosts speak to you now, and thus He did speak to your fathers, saying, Execute true judgment. The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the

tranquillity of their fathers, and must be the restoring of their tranquillity, are not keeping fasts and offering sacrifices, but doing justly and loving mercy; duties which they were bound to by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them. H.

Habitual communion with God is the root of the truest and purest compassion. It does not withdraw us from our fellow feeling with our brethren, it cultivates no isolation for undisturbed beholding of God. It at once supplies a standard by which to measure the greatness of man's godlessness, and therefore of his gloom, and a motive for laying the pain of these upon our hearts, as if they were our own. He has looked into the heavens to little purpose who has not learned how bad and how sad the world now is, and how God bends over it in pitying love. And that same fellowship which will clear our eyes and soften our hearts is also the one consolation which we have when our sense of all the ills that flesh is heir to becomes deep to near despair. When one thinks of the real facts of human life, and tries to conceive of the frightful meanness and passion and hate and wretchedness that has been howling and shrieking and gibbering and groaning through dreary millenniums, one's brain reels, and hope seems to be absurdity, and joy a sin against our fellows, as a feast would be in a house next door to where was a funeral. Ah! brethren, if it were not for the heavenward look, how could we bear the sight of earth! "We see not yet all things put under Him." No, God knows, far enough off from that. Man's folly, man's submission to the creatures he should rule, man's agonies, and man's transgression, are a grim contrast to the psalmist's vision. If we had only earth to look to, despair of the race, expressed in settled melancholy apathy, or in fierce cynicism, were the wisest attitude. But there is more within our view than earth; "we see Jesus;" we look to the heaven, and as we behold the true man, we see more than ever, indeed, how far from that pattern we all are; but we can bear the thought of what men as yet have been, when we see that perfect example of what men shall be. The root and the consolation of our sorrow for men's evils is communion with God. A. M.

**11-14.** These stubborn sinners hardened their hearts on purpose, lest they should hear what God said to them by the written word, by the law of Moses, and by the words of the prophets that preached to them. Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts. As

they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers. As He cried to them in their prosperity to leave their sins, and they would not hear, but persisted in their iniquities; so they cried to Him in the day of their trouble to remove His judgments, and He would not hear, but lengthened out their calamities. As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, so God dissipated them and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind; He scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not, and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from. As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it; their land was desolate after them. H.

**Chap. 8.** As already remarked in the introduction to chap. 7, this continues and concludes the subject opened in that chapter. It gives the brighter side—the message of the Lord to the truly humbled, penitent and believing portion of the people. Hence it abounds in cheering promises.

**1, 2.** "Jealous for Zion." This revived jealousy for Zion implies that the Lord's love for her was enkindled afresh; His pity, too, became active; His apprehensions also for the honor of His name before the nations; and not least, His indignation toward the people that had so cruelly oppressed Zion. All these feelings conspired toward His purpose to return in mercy to Zion, as the next verse states.

**3.** These are the blessings. Moral purity stands specially prominent. "Jerusalem shall be called" (because she shall *really be*) "the city of truth," distinguished above all other cities for substantial integrity of character; and the temple mountain where the Lord dwells shall be "the holy mountain"—holy, by reason of the regeneration and sanctification of those who worship the Lord there. Such should be the results of the Lord's returning to Zion, to dwell there by His spiritual presence. These are the legitimate criteria of His real presence by His Spirit anywhere.

**4, 5.** A beautiful scene of peace and prosperity, indicated by the groups of the aged, still living as witnesses to the long-continued exemption from desolating wars, and the yet more numerous throng of little boys and girls playing and happy in the streets. Evermore, through all the ages before Christ, such external prosperity is accounted as evidence of God's favor and approval. "Length of days is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor." The genius of God's providential government



in that age involved a high degree of present retribution. II. C.

The words used are so vivid that the writer seems to become an inspired artist ; with a few clear strokes and strong colors he paints a fascinating picture of that coming glory of his nation, so that we, standing here so many hundred years afterward, find it as fresh as if the artist's hand were just moved aside from the canvas. How thoroughly human the figures and impressions of that Bible picture are ; and how lifelike they represent our religion to be ! We may take these sentences as a graphic outline of what God would have a Christian state of society to be, not in heaven, but in this world. In the scriptural imagery, or symbolism, Jerusalem is a type of the Christian Church. Where the Gospel of Christ has done its perfect work, where Christianity has realized itself in social institutions, and has penetrated all our private and public life with its practical regulation, there the whole of our being will come under its control ; all its periods, from childhood to old age, will take the stamp and bear the fruit of this holy and gracious power in the heart ; every capacity in us will be invigorated to its best exercise by Christian faith ; our common work—the handiwork of the husbandman and mechanic, the intellectual work of the scholar, the housework of woman, the shopwork of the trader—will be better and safer and happier work for being done in the name of Christ, for the sake of Christ, out of that living union of the heart with Him which makes Him the real life and power of all our daily service—done by a Christian will, with a Christian purpose, in a Christian spirit, with Christian hands and brain and feet.

Christianity is too divine and bountiful a blessing to be so hedged in and misapprehended. It intends that every man and woman and boy and girl shall be the better for it, and every corner and instant in the character and life of each shall be the better. It comes to make better workmen as well as better believers, better men for the life that now is and for that which is to come—better citizens and neighbors, better husbands and fathers, better parents and children, better boys and girls. It would make strong men more manly, pure women more pure, light-hearted children lighter hearted, because the love of Christ casts all fear out. The unseen city it is silently building is a city of truth, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the holy mountain. Old men and old women shall dwell in it, and it shall be full of

boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. It comes down, to be sure, like a bride, out of heaven from God. But although it descends from above, it is human in its adaptations ; it is a dwelling-place for just such people as we all are ; human feet walk in it ; human voices are heard along its avenues ; human comfort lights its windows. The Gospel is sent into the world just as the world is. It is not some other race, but ours, in its own flesh and blood, in its habitations and occupations, that the Saviour comes to teach, to purify, to redeem, and to train up for His future service—that heavenly labor which is perfect rest. F. D. H.

6. Though it should seem marvellous and almost incredible in your eyes that I should bestow so great blessings, yet must it be marvellous in Mine ? Is anything too hard for the Lord ? Is any measure of blessings so great as to be marvellous in view of the great depths of Divine love ?

7, 8. This is a promise to save His people wherever they were, and to gather them in from their dispersions—two quarters of the heavens, the land toward the sun-rising and the land toward the sun setting being named—a part for the whole. II. C.—This denotes the general restoration of the Jewish nation from their several dispersions (cf. verses 13, 20, 23) ; an event foretold by most of the prophets of the Old Testament. "The west country" appears to have a particular relation to their present dispersion, great numbers of them being in these latter ages settled in the western parts of the world. W. Louth.—At the time of the delivery of this prophecy there were very few or no Jews dispersed west of the Holy Land Wells.

8. God would renew His covenant with them, would be faithful to them and make them so to Him. "They shall be My people, and I will be their God." That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new made, in truth and in righteousness. II.—In truth and in righteousness. These words apply equally to God and His people, and imply that they shall on both sides truly and faithfully perform the conditions of the covenant once more renewed between them. Blayney.

9-17. God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy He had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for

their conviction. These verses contain strong encouragements, with reference to the difficulties they now labored under. H.

**9.** *Of the prophets—i.e., Haggai and Zechariah.* The reference is to the time when the building of the temple was being proceeded with, as related in Ezra 5 : 1, 2 (where it is said that Zerubbabel and Jeshua rose up and *began* to build the house of God which was at Jerusalem), and *not* to the actual laying of the foundation of the house of the Lord in the second year of Cyrus, as related in Ezra 3 : 8-13. This latter became, as Keil remarks, an eventful fact through the continuation of the building in the second year of Darius. B. C.

**10.** When the Lord says, "I set all men each one against his neighbor," He refers to what He let men do, in the sense of *not preventing it*—as a judgment on them for their sins. H. C.

**11, 12.** What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them : "Thus and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but now God will change His way toward you (verse 11). Now that you return to your duty, God will comfort you according to the time that He has afflicted you ; the ebbing tide shall flow again." They shall have great plenty and abundance of all good things (verse 12). The seed sown shall be prosperous, and yield a great increase ; the vine shall give her fruit, which makes glad the heart, and the ground its products which strengthen the heart ; they shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. The heavens shall give their dew, without which the earth would not yield her increase ; which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth, and of their dependence upon Him. It is said of a sweeping rain that it leaves no food (Prov. 28 : 3) ; but here the gentle dew waters the earth that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And thus God will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said a little before (Hag. 2 : 16, 19), "From this day will I bless you." God's people, that serve Him faithfully, have great possessions : "All is yours, for you are Christ's." H.

**12.** To the life and beauty of a Judean or Egyptian landscape an abundant supply of dew was absolutely necessary ; if it were withheld, beneath the fervor of a summer sun everything would wither and die. The dew in those climates falls so rapidly and abundantly that it

may be collected in a shallow vessel, like water from a shower of rain ; and the want of rain in the day-time is thus gently and constantly supplied by the bounty of the night ; were it otherwise the most distressing droughts must be the consequence. "Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit," God says, describing the retributive consequences of the continued sins of His people. But again, when God will renew His mercy and fulfil His promises He says, "The seed shall be prosperous ; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew." G. B. C.

**13-15.** This passage relates to the captives who had been carried away upon the destruction of the Israelitish kingdom, as well as to those of the captivity of Judah in Babylon. The punishment had been inflicted at two different times ; but both nations were invited to participate in the blessings of the return to Zion. B. C.

**14, 15.** The antithesis here is this : As I thought to punish your fathers for their great provocations, and did not swerve from My thought, but carried it into execution ; so have I now thought to bless Jerusalem, and *I shall not fail to do it!* Fear not!

**16, 17.** The usual and always pertinent exhortations to practise righteousness and truth. The last clause of verse 16 enjoins upon them to administer law in the courts according to justice and truth. This would promote real peace and prosperity. Such decisions are decisions of peace. H. C.

**16. Speak the truth.** The essence of lying consists in formal falsehood or a voluntary enunciation of what is not true. If any one, consequently, utters a falsehood, believing it to be true, he himself is not guilty of lying, though the thing itself be materially false, as he had no intention of falsehood. What is beside the intention of the speaker cannot enter into the specific difference of the act. In like manner, if a man should utter a truth believing it to be a lie, he would be chargeable with the moral guilt of falsehood, that being the purpose of his will which determines the character of his utterance, though accidentally it happens to be true. This pertains to the *species* of falsehood. But the purpose to mislead another by deception does not pertain to the species, but to the *perfection* of lying. It is falsehood having its perfect work. *Thornwell.*

You cannot overthrow falsehood by negation, but by establishing the antagonistic truth.

The refutation which is to last must be positive, not negative. It is an endless work to be uprooting weeds; plant the ground with wholesome vegetation, and then the juices which would have otherwise fed rankness will pour themselves into a more vigorous growth; the dwindled weeds will be easily raked out then. It is an endless task to be refuting error! Plant truth, and the error will pine away. F. W. R.

Concealment is not always a wrong, as a lie is. One of the prime duties of man is the concealment of that which is his own, and to a knowledge of which another has no right. Toward those who have a right to know the whole truth, a man must not conceal any portion of the truth. Toward those who have no right to the whole truth, a man may properly conceal that measure of the truth which is his alone, by any proper means; but lying is never a proper means. At all times concealment without falsehood is right toward those who are not entitled to know the whole truth; but concealment may be practical falsehood toward those who have a right to know all the facts in the case. The first obligation of truth is Godward. A man ought not to lie, because a lie is a sin against God. Even apart from the question of his obligation to his fellow-man, man ought to refrain from lying, because to lie is to detach himself from God and to put himself in the devil's service. The suggestion of lying for the good of man or for the glory of God is an absurdity, inasmuch as a lie has no place or part or possibility in the plan or service of God. Hence a "system" of Christian ethics that admits that a lie may be justifiable is not a system of Christian ethics, because the one all-dividing line between truth and falsehood is ignored in it. H. C. T.

There is a real though subtle distinction between concealment of truth *for the purpose* of deceiving, and concealment (from those only who have no right to know the facts in issue) *without intention* of deceiving, even though with moral certainty that some one will be self-deceived; and the solution of the ancient puzzle of casuistry lies in the detection of this fine but valid distinction. We are under obligation to God to use our wits in concealing facts of which Providence has made us stewards, from those who have no right to these facts; and so to use our wits as *merely* to conceal, and to conceal merely the things we are in duty bound to conceal, without any effort to deceive; and this, irrespective of any conjecture as to possible or probable self-deception on the part of the

curious. The stewardship of facts is as sacred as that of wealth. We are not responsible for mistakes people stumble into through improper curiosity. We are responsible in the premises for four things and four only: (1) strict adherence to truth; (2) painstaking concealment of facts which others ought not to know; (3) use of our God-given wits ("Be ye wise as serpents") in devising means of concealment—as when Rahab *hid* the spies; (4) absolute elimination of intention to pervert the intelligence or warp the minds of others. Having made sure of these four things, in all cases where the inquiring party has no right to the facts, our responsibility ends. W. W. Farris.

**18, 19.** Here we find the explicit answer to the question sent up from the people by the hand of Sherezer and Regem-melech. Those fasts shall be changed to seasons of joy and gladness, and to cheerful feasts—only the Lord still enforces that which is evermore essential to their abiding prosperity, "*Love the truth and peace.*" H. C.

**19.** *The fast of the fourth month* was a memorial of the capture of Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. (See Jer. 39:2; 52:6, 7.) *The fast of the tenth month* was a memorial of the commencement of the blockade of Jerusalem. (See Jer. 39:1; 52:4.) B. C.

*Therefore love truth and peace.* God values an upright conversation more than the exactest care of outward performances. (See verse 16.) These instructions prepared men's minds for receiving the Gospel, the laws of which chiefly recommend purity of heart and life. (See Jer. 31:33.) W. Louth.

A sort of spurious peacemaking consists simply in "letting things alone," "not meddling," "being sure that all will come right," "taking things easily," "minding one's own business, and letting one's neighbors mind theirs." Now this "let alone" sort of peacemaking makes—if it can be said to *make* anything—a very shabby sort of peace. It leaves vice unchecked, it leaves ungodliness rampant, it leaves ignorance untaught, it leaves secret grudges to fester in people's hearts: I know not whether selfishness or cowardice have the greater part in it; for selfishness and cowardice are both very largely present in it, and selfishness and cowardice are the very opposites of Christian peacemaking. And such miserable peace is no peace at all; for though it may be quiet for a time, yet there is no security whatever that it may not blaze out at any moment into the wildest excesses of strife or evil. Dale.

To give no offence, and where possible take

none ; to stand clear of strife ; to look on when hearts are torn and lives are spent in a mad contention with the laws of God ; to let human nature fret itself to death, out of peace, hateful and hating, rebellious and proud : this is not to be like the Eternal Father. Had He done so of old, the Son had kept His pure and peaceful heaven ; no angels had sung peace on earth at His birth ; no sweet message, like an olive leaf, had grown out of His cross. Pacification at His own cost and pain is the supreme idea of our Christian God : His name is Reconciler. They who have been born of Him, and are so like Him that they can see Him, are in this world as He was in it—the world's reconcilers.

*Dykes.*

**20-22.** "It shall come to pass that there shall come people and the inhabitants of many cities ; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts ; I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord and to pray before the Lord." Churches shall come to adore Him, cities to consult Him, nations to surrender to Him, all the kindreds of the earth to fall down before Him. They shall not be content to praise Him alone ; they shall feel as if they wanted help—the help of the world—to raise a song adequate to His praise, and a prayer equal to the ardor of their desires. "And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord." Then man will have found his only proper place ; will have returned to the only spot in the universe which becomes him—at the feet of God. And, having found his proper place, his ultimate end, there will be rest and peace ; going out of himself, and losing himself in God. Then God will have recovered His proper glory ; every idol will be abolished, every rival power cast out, the eyes of all will wait upon Him, all flesh will be seen staying themselves upon Him ; He will be seen by the universe as the centre of a lapsing creation, the support and stay of a sinking world. Then the design of the whole Gospel constitution will be completed, "that no flesh should glory in His presence ;" everything will have rebounded to the glory of His grace. And when all flesh shall thus be seen in effect, prostrate before God in prayer, what will it be but a prelude to the worship of heaven ? What will remain but that the whole should be transferred to the employment of praise above ! Infinite love, ascending the throne, and putting on the crown,

shall sit down and enjoy an eternal Sabbath of love ! While the myriads of the redeemed and glorified, casting their crowns before Him, shall ascribe their happiness to Him, and the jubilee of eternity shall begin. *J. Harris.*

**23.** Each of the ten representative men stands for one nation, since they are each of different language, and taken together represent "all languages of the nations," indicating that people of every tongue and clime shall come to Zion for the law and the light of God. Those glorious conversions of Gentile nations which are to take place far down in the ages of the Gospel dispensation, if foretold at all by Jewish prophets and for Jewish readers, must be presented in thoroughly Jewish language and in harmony with Jewish conceptions. So we ought to expect to find it throughout the Old Testament prophets ; so we do find it. On this principle the "Jew" is *any one* with whom *God is*. Under the Gospel system "he is not a Jew who is one *outwardly*" (Rom. 2 : 28, 29). This passage, therefore, is a prediction that "the inhabitants of many cities," "yea, many people and strong nations," yea, nations so diverse that they speak all the languages of the earth—shall come to those who have the Gospel and beg to be led to the Lamb of God. H. C.

The reply regarding fasts closes with the assurance that the fasts shall be turned into feasts, that days of uninterrupted gladness are approaching, days in which God shall so manifestly bless Israel that all nations shall observe and turn toward Jerusalem. "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." This is the ultimate attraction, the presence of God. This gradually approves itself as the most powerful determining influence in the life of nations and of individuals. It is this that secures the well-being and felicity here described. And the prediction that the Divine presence among the Jews would attract men to the race has been fulfilled so far as the Western world is concerned. It is as manifested in the history of the Jews and in the person of Jesus of Nazareth that God has been recognized and worshipped by Christendom. In Christ we find one who is as personal as ourselves, and as Divine as we can conceive or as our needs require. In Him we find one whom instinctively we worship ; one able to respond to and satisfy our faith ; the Master of nature, unappalled in presence of its most terrific moods, overcoming its most overwhelming ills ; one who is transcendent also in the moral world, alone upon earth unsullied by temptation, in the world and yet

neither weakened, misled, nor lowered by its tone, and stretching His hand as from a position above all possibility of failure to all who crave His help. Whatever God is, that is God as we have to do with Him, God in human nature revealing Himself personally. *Dots.*

## ZECHARIAH, CHAPTERS IX., X.

**9 : 1** THE burden of the word of the LORD upon the land of Hadrach, and Damascus *shall be* its resting place : for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward the LORD .  
 2 and Hamath also which bordereth thereon : Tyre and Zidon, because she is very wise.  
 3 And Tyre did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will dispossess her, and he will smite her power in the sea ; and she shall be devoured with fire. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear ; Gaza also, and shall be sore pained ; and Ekron, for her expectation shall be ashamed ; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth ; and he also shall be a remnant for our God : and he shall be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about mine house against the army, that none pass through or return : and no oppressor shall pass through them any more : for now have I seen with mine eyes.  
 9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy king cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off ; and he shall speak peace unto the nations : and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, because of the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope : even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee. For I have bent Judah for me, I have filled the bow with Ephraim ; and I will stir up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and I will make thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning ; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of hosts shall defend them ; and they shall devour, and shall tread down the sling stones ; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine : and they shall be filled like bowls, like the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people : for *they shall be as the* stones of a crown, lifted on high over his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty ! corn shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the maids.

**10 : 1** Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain, *even of* the LORD that maketh lightnings : and he shall give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. For the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie ; and they have told false dreams, they comfort in vain : therefore they go their way like sheep, they are afflicted, because there is no shepherd. Mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the he goats : for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and shall make them as his goodly horse in the battle. From him shall come forth the corner stone, from him the nail, from him the battle bow, from him every exactor together. And they shall be as mighty men, treading down *their enemies* in the mire of the streets in the battle ; and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them : and the riders on horses shall be confounded.  
 6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again, for I have mercy upon them ; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off : for I am the LORD their God, and I will hear them. And *they of* Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine : yea, their children shall see it, and rejoice ; their heart shall be glad in the LORD. I will hiss for them, and gather them ; for I have redeemed them : and they shall increase as they have increased. And I

will sow them among the peoples ; and they shall remember me in far countries : and they  
 10 shall live with their children, and shall return. I will bring them again also out of the land  
 of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead  
 11 and Lebanon ; and *place* shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea of  
 affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up :  
 and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.  
 12 And I will strengthen them in the Lord ; and they shall walk up and down in his name,  
 saith the Lord.

**Chap. 9.** The third portion of the book is of far wider significance. It begins (chap. 9) with the denunciation of God's anger upon Damascus, Tyre, Sidon and Philistia. These probably are named as representing the enemies of the theocracy, and their fall is to be followed by the restoration of the monarchy at Jerusalem. But its King is not to come in royal fashion as Jeremiah foretold, "riding in chariots and on horses, He and His servants and His people" (Jer. 22:4), but lowly, and sitting upon an ass ; and He is to speak not war, but peace to the heathen, and as the King of Peace "His dominion is to reach from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." The Jews in captivity, now "prisoners of hope," are to return, and Ephraim and Judah, once again united, together are to form an empire more powerful than that of Greece ; while their own land is to be so fruitful that the abundance of corn and wine shall lead to happy marriages, and fill their dwellings with young men and maids. R. P. S.

This chapter begins with announcing the fate of the Syrians, Sidonians and Philistines, contrasted with the better prospects of the Jewish nation. It foretells the coming of the Messiah to Jerusalem and the peace of His kingdom. The restoration of Israel and Judah is afterward predicted, together with a series of glorious victories and great prosperity, which are set forth at large in this and the next chapter. *Blayney.*

Verses 1-8 sketch the sweep of the conquering hosts of Alexander the Great in Western Asia, and along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, and refer to the special protection afforded by the Lord to His people in the midst of that scene of danger ; then the prophet (verses 9, 10) passes over to the greater protection and salvation wrought out by King Messiah for His people ; and then (verses 10-17) on the same analogy predicts the protection of the Jews against the Greco-Syrian power in the age of the Maccabees.

1. It is remarkable that though Hadrach (Persia) is named as the first to feel the sweep of this conquering devastator, Alexander, and though precisely this is the order of the historic

facts, yet the prophet passes her with only her enigmatical name. A burden of the word of the Lord is upon her land ; that is all he thinks proper to say. Damascus is the place upon which this burden rests down. The predicted ruin should smite and crush her.

2. Hamath, a country lying north of Palestine, bordered on Damascus, and therefore fell within the range of this great conqueror, and came down beneath the force of his arms. So did Tyre, with Sidon, because she had taken great pride in her wisdom, and had so utterly renounced all reliance on the true God. The verb rendered "be very wise" is in the singular, and refers primarily to Tyre. The word rendered "though" should be read "because," this being its usual and best established meaning. The full thought is brought out by Ezekiel in 28 : 2, 3, 6, 17.

3, 4. Further and special notice is taken of Tyre. After having been once fearfully desolated by Nebuchadnezzar, she had fortified herself on an island with immense strength, and, by means of her extensive commerce, had amassed great wealth. But the Lord would *dispose* her of all this wealth. So the original signifies, and not merely "cast her out." He would also smite her bulwarks, built up and standing in the sea, and she should be at length devoured utterly by fire. After a siege of seven months, Alexander took the city, B.C. 332, and every feature of this prophecy was fulfilled.

5. From Phœnicia the conqueror swept on to Philistia. The prophet's course of thought is the same. The fall of Tyre sent a panic through those cities of far inferior strength. How could they stand before a power with which Tyre, in all her glory and prowess, could not cope ? See the same thoughts in Isa. 23. Tyre held Alexander's army at bay seven months ; the cities of Philistia scarcely retarded the conquering march of his army at all. H. C.

*Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.* Ashkelon and the other cities of the Philistines having been subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar, as foretold by Jeremiah (chap. 47), never recovered their

former independency; but, falling under the dominion of the great empires in succession, were almost continually involved in their wars, and suffered considerably, till by degrees they dwindled away, and at last sunk to nothing. Zephaniah's prophecy (chap. 2: 4-7) extends to this.

6. *And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod.* The word rendered "bastard" does not here imply an illegitimate offspring, but simply one of foreign extraction. So that it is meant that the city should be peopled with strangers, not descended from its present possessors. Ashdod, or Azotus, was burned and destroyed by Jonathan, brother of Judas Maccabeus, and eight thousand of its men burned or slain (1 Mac. 10: 84, 85). These were probably what was meant by "the pride of the Philistines," the prime or excellency of the ancient inhabitants, in whose room the strangers were introduced.

7. At what time or whence the new colony was brought to dwell in Ashdod we are not informed. But some years after, in the reign of Alexander Jannæus, Azotus is enumerated by Josephus among the cities of the Phenicians, which the Jews had been some time possessed of; and it is well known that that people exacted of all that were under their dominion a conformity, to a certain degree at least, to their religious rites and usages. This will serve to explain what is here meant by "taking his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth." The stranger was required to abstain from eating blood, and from such things as were held in abomination by the Jewish law. *Blatney.*

6, 7. The pride of Philistia would be effectually humbled. And furthermore, the Lord would thoroughly cure them of their idolatry. The prophet, in representing this fact, thinks of them as eating things offered to idols, or as feasting in honor of their idols, and then the Lord plucks out the flesh from between their teeth and cleanses out the blood from their mouth. Then the remnant are converted—"shall be for our God"—are honored as a captain of a thousand in Judah; and they of Ekron shall come to be as near to God as the Jebusites—the primitive inhabitants of Jerusalem—after that city became the holy and the chosen one of God. (See Josh. 15: 63; Judges 19: 10, 11; 2 Sam. 24: 16.) This prophecy had its special fulfilment when the Gospel was preached with great success by the apostles in those cities. It has its general fulfilment under the broad doctrine that all the great revolutions which the Lord brings about by war shall cul-

minate at last in the wider range and sweep of His converting grace. Hence so many prophecies terminate like this. (See Isa. 19: 18-25; 23: 15-18; Jer. 12: 15, 16.)

8. The fulfilment of this promise began with the nearer future, and was specially developed in the time of Alexander, when it was indeed striking and almost miraculous. If we may credit Josephus, Alexander sent to the Jews his usual demand for tribute as a token of submission, and was answered that they were in allegiance to the Persian throne. Offended by this reply, he soon after came in person; met Jaddua, the high priest, in his robes of office, attended by other priests; was solemnly impressed by their appearance; treated them with extraordinary deference, and ever after accounted the Jews his special friends. In explanation of this extraordinary conduct, he referred to a dream in which a personage attired like this high priest met him while yet at home, and pondering the question of invading Persia, encouraged him to go forward, assuring him of victory and success. Consequently he recognized this high priest as the minister of the invisible gods, and all the more so when the Jews showed him the prophecies of Daniel respecting himself. Of the general fact of Alexander's special favor to the Jews, there can be no doubt. This favor fulfilled the prophecy before us (verse 8). God's hand was in the agencies that secured it. Whether those agencies are given with general accuracy by Josephus has been questioned; but for aught that appears, with more reason for affirming than for denying. In its general significance, this promise is good for the true Church of God in every age of time.

9. This striking case of protection against one of the world's greatest and most formidable conquerors—protection which specially shielded Jerusalem when all the adjacent cities and kingdoms were overrun and fearfully desolated—suggested the greater and more glorious protection achieved for the people of God through their incarnate Messiah, at once their great High Priest and their supreme King. Over this Deliverer let Zion rejoice exceedingly! This summons to exultant joy indicates that Messianic blessings are before the prophet's eye. His character as *King* is specially prominent here because suggested by the protection He gives His people against their enemies.

**Riding upon an ass.** All the sons of David rode on mules—an animal of the same general character. In the transfer of the kingdom from David to Solomon, great account is made of his riding on David's mule in the royal

procession on coronation day. It is therefore simply impossible that any odium could have been attached to riding on an ass at the time Zechariah wrote, or at the time when Christ fulfilled His prediction. But there is one idea which deserves a far more prominent position than it has had. *The ass was not adapted to war; the horse was.* For the most part the ass appears in Jewish history either used by men in peaceful life, or by women who should never be in any other. On the contrary, the horse of scripture history is a war horse, with either his dragoon or his chariot. Nor let us fail to notice in our context that while King Messiah is to ride on an ass, the Lord says: "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem;" and He shall speak peace to the heathen." Jerusalem especially, the holy city where Jehovah dwelt, must have no horses. Their very names and their presence are too much associated with war. Zech. 12:4 shows how the horse is commonly thought of as related to the Hebrew state. In the millennial age, horses for once (for the first time?) shall be really consecrated to God (14:20), a most remarkable fact, and indicating a stupendous change! The ass then is here an emblem of peace—of peaceful pursuits, of a peaceful King, and of His peaceful reign, showing that Messiah's kingdom should not be of this world, and should not make its conquests with carnal weapons. This significant act, riding on an ass, is a symbol of Christ's peaceful reign, inaugurating Him for the sort of work which the next verse describes. H. C.

It is not with the pomp of an earthly conqueror, but with lowly array and riding upon an ass, that the Messiah makes His entry into Jerusalem. His kingdom has no need of war-like weapons, which are, on the contrary, to be swept away. Beginning at Jerusalem, He founds a peaceful kingdom, which is to reach from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. O.

Over palms and rushes He makes His way to the cross, and through the cross to the throne; how is He here made manifest as the *Founder of a spiritual kingdom of God!* Nay, His kingdom is not of this world. Not on the proud war horse, but on the humble beast of burden the son of David treads within Jerusalem; no swords are here drawn, but palms are waved in His honor; not over corpses, but over garments lies His course; while not war cries, but loud hosannas peal. Not with force and violence comes He to reign, but through the mild power of His love; and who can doubt if He

shall at the last be victor? Yea, verily, *the future Conqueror of the world* passes here before us in solitary unique splendor; and His entrance into Jerusalem becomes an image and prophecy of His course through the world's history. Lowly, gentle, compassionate, but victorious; just where He seems lost, so He goes forward, from age to age, from land to land, city to city; His followers poor, and low in rank: while even His foes are forced continually to cry out, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him" (John 12:19)! *Van O.*

The one underlying idea of Revelation is the outlook on a universal kingdom of God. This primeval promise and principle alike forms the beginning and is the goal; it is the heading and the summary of Revelation. And it was this foundation-truth which unfolded throughout the course of Israel's development—in their history, rites and institutions, as well as in the more direct communications through the prophets. As Israel was ideally, so all nations were through their ministry to become really the possession of God: a kingdom of priests, a holy people; for all the earth, as well as Israel, was God's. And the realization of this would be the kingdom of God on earth.

All the institutions of Israel were in strict accordance with this ideal destiny. Alike the laws, the worship, the institutions, and the mission of Israel were intended to express these two things: acknowledgment of God and dependence upon God. Thus viewed, the whole might be summed up in this one term, which runs through the whole Old Testament: "The servant of Jehovah." The patriarchs were the servants of the Lord; Israel was the servant of the Lord; and their threefold representative institutions expressed the same idea. The *Priest* was to be wholly the Servant of the Lord. Hence the smallest transgression of the ordinances of his calling involved his destruction or removal. The *King* was not to bear rule in the manner of heathen princes, but to be the Servant of the Lord, in strictest subordination to Jehovah. Hence Saul, despite his nobler qualities, was really the antichrist; and David, despite his grievous faults, the typical Christ of Israel's royalty, because of his constant acknowledgment of God's kinship. And the *prophet* was simply the servant of the Lord, telling naught but God's Word, in such strict adherence to the letter of his commission, that its slightest breach brought immediate punishment. And the Messiah, as summing up in Himself ideal Israel—its history, institutions,



mission and promises—was to be the Servant of the Lord. Hence the prophecies which most clearly portray Him—those of Isaiah—might be headed by this title: The Book of the Servant of Jehovah; the idea rising, through people, prophet, king, even through a foreign instrumental doer of His behest, up to Him as the Servant of the Lord, the ideal Sufferer by and for the unrighteousness of man, the ideal Sacrifice and Priest for his sins, the ideal Teacher in his ignorance, Comforter in his sorrow, Restorer in his decay, and Dispenser of all blessing to the world at large—the Spirit-anointed One out of whose fullness all were to receive, and who would fulfil all that Israel had meant and prepared. Or, going backward, He was to be the Son of Man, the second Adam, whose victory would restore what sin had lost; the true Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. This, we believe, the Old Testament meant, and Jesus of Nazareth came to fulfil. *A. Eder-sheim.*

**10.** This verse is closely connected with verse 9—a part of the same grand prophecy of the Messiah and of His reign on earth—set here in a fine antithesis with the conquering, world-wide kingdom of Alexander. The chariot and the horse must be discarded and abolished as *war institutions*, and therefore wholly out of place under this peaceful reign. They can bear no part in the great conquests which Zion's King is to make. He has no fighting to do with carnal weapons. On the contrary, He "speaks" peace to the nations. The Gospel of His word carries with it peace and love to men. *H. C.*

This prophecy, together with those of Hosea 2: 18; Micah 5: 5, 10; Hag. 2: 22, as they foretell the outward peacefulness of Christ's Church or kingdom, relate to the flourishing state of it in the latter times of the world. The words which denote the extent of that kingdom, "His dominion shall be from sea," etc., are taken from Ps. 72: 8, where David describes the extent of Solomon's kingdom, from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, and from the river Euphrates to the border of Egypt. (Cf. Ex. 23: 31; 1 K. 4: 21; De. 11: 24.) This, as appears from several expressions in that psalm, was a figurative description of Christ's kingdom, which should be enlarged toward the four quarters of the world. *W. Louth.*

**11.** *By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit.* As for thee, O Zion, whose covenant with me is made and confirmed by the precious blood of the Messiah, in that new and everlasting testament, I do

herein give thee a type of thy future deliverance from all thy spiritual miseries. *Bp. Hall.*—Anciently in great houses, and particularly in the East, deep, dry pits, called dungeons, were appropriated for the confinement of prisoners. Into one of these Jeremiah was cast (Jer. 38: 6). *Blagney.*

**11-13.** The ninth and tenth verses may be regarded as a digression from the regular course of thought, and embraced in a parenthesis. In verse 11 the prophet returns to speak of events that follow shortly after those predicted (verses 1-8). The conflict (verse 13) between the sons of Zion and the sons of Greece finds its fulfilment in the furious wars waged during twenty-four years between the Jews and the Syrian Greeks, commencing in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. His people are here called Greeks because his kingdom was one of the four into which the great Grecian empire of Alexander was divided, and also because their language and customs were Grecian. *H. C.*

**12.** In the ninth verse of this chapter proclamation is made that the Messiah is at hand; and the Church is called upon to go forth to meet Him with joy. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee." And that the awe of His majesty might be no bar to their joy, they are told, for their encouragement, that He comes in such a form of condescension and grace as serves rather to invite than forbid their approach to Him: for "He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." They are further assured, in the tenth verse, that as the ensigns of His royalty differ so widely from those which earthly monarchs use, so He shall govern His subjects, and subdue His enemies, not by external force, but by inward persuasion; not by "the chariot, the horse and the battle-bow," for all these shall be "cut off;" but by the preaching of the Gospel, accompanied with the powerful operation of the Spirit, which is emphatically called "speaking peace unto the heathen;" in consequence whereof, "His dominions shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." And to finish the description of this King of Zion, it is added, in the eleventh verse, that the gracious aim of His government is to set men at liberty from the vilest slavery, and to release them from the most ignominious confinement, by opening their prison doors, and "sending them forth out of the pit wherein is no water." This too He is to perform in a way peculiarly endear-

ing: He is to purchase their freedom with the price of His own blood; which, with great propriety, is styled "the blood of the covenant," as it ratifies and confirms that covenant of grace, whereby sinners are reinstated in the favor of God, and rescued from the power of all their spiritual enemies.

The like representation is given of the Messiah (Isa. 42: 6, 7) "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." And the Messiah Himself is introduced (Isa. 61, at the beginning), speaking to the same purpose, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." In all these passages He is plainly pointed out to us in the character of a Redeemer; and, as such, He issues forth the proclamation: *Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.*

By the *stronghold* to which we are exhorted to turn, is undoubtedly meant "the blood of the covenant," spoken of in the preceding verse; or rather the new covenant itself, ratified and sealed by the blood of Christ. This indeed is a *stronghold*, an impregnable defence to all who flee to it for refuge: It is "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Here an effectual supply is to be found for all the sinner's wants and necessities; an infinite sacrifice to expiate his guilt; all conquering grace to subdue his corruptions; unerring wisdom to guide him; irresistible power to protect him; unbounded goodness to relieve his present needs, and to crown him with glory and happiness hereafter. In short, "the whole fulness of the Godhead" is treasured up in the Mediator of this covenant; and "he is made of God," unto all who believe on Him, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." R. W.

15. The reader will be careful to notice the contrast between these verses and the Messianic passage (verses 9, 10) on the point of war with deadly weapons. Under Messiah's peaceful reign there shall be no chariots or horses of war; the battle bow shall be cut off and unknown; but here, in the age before Messiah came, Judah is the Lord's bow, Ephraim his

arrow; the Lord fights at their head, and they too fight with determined and almost furious bravery. Manifestly it is his purpose in this chapter to put the future kingdom of the Messiah in the strongest possible contrast with those militant features of the earlier age, and to assure us that in the good time coming men shall truly "learn war no more." The Gospel, having once developed its whole genius and power, shall prove itself thoroughly and only "peace on earth and good will to men." H. C.

16. The love He has for them and the relation wherein they stand to Him; they are the flock of His people and He is their Shepherd; they are to Him as the stones of a crown which are very precious and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard: never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown as God is and will be with His people, who are near and dear unto Him and in whom He glories. They are a crown of glory and a royal diadem in His hand (Isa. 62: 2, 3). And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up My jewels (Mal. 3: 17). And they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon His land, as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy. God's people are His glory; so He is pleased to make them, so He is pleased to reckon them.

17. The provision He makes for them is the matter of their triumph. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make Him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know Him. They are to Him as the stones of a crown; but what is He to them? Our business in the temple is to behold the beauty of the Lord (Ps. 27: 4); and how great is that beauty! How far does it transcend all other beauties, particularly the beauty of His holiness. This may refer to the Messiah, to Zion's King that cometh. See that King in His beauty (Isa. 33: 17), who is fairer than the children of men, the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Though in the eye of the world He had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith how great is His beauty! So they admire and give thanks for the gifts of God's favor and grace; His bounty as well as His beauty; for how great is His goodness! How rich in mercy is He! How deep, how full are its springs! How various, how plenteous, how precious are its streams! H.

After so glorious a vision of mercy and glory, benefits and blessings, in the economy of man's redemption, well may the prophet cry out in a pious rapture and holy astonishment, "How

great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty ! " Goodness unspeakable to fallen, sinful man ! Goodness conducted by almighty power, and beautified in the whole display thereof by infinite wisdom, holiness and truth ! Holiness and truth with respect to His own glory ! *Wagna.*

**Chap. 10.** This chapter is a continuation from the close of chap. 9, and hence has for its ground idea the wars of the Maccabees against the Syrian power. Verse 1 stands immediately connected with 9:17, indicating the external prosperity that succeeded those wars; verse 2 falls back to note the apostasies which brought on this Syrian scourge; verse 3 the zeal and jealousy of the Lord kindled against the corrupt Jewish leaders, and the remedy for their mischiefs; in verse 4 men rise up capable of filling positions of responsible trust; in verse 5 they fight valiantly, because the Lord is with them, and confounds their foes. In verses 6-12, on the basis of this great deliverance wrought for His people, the prophet predicts that in times more remote the Lord will work similar but yet more glorious achievements for His Zion. H. C.

This chapter connects itself so obviously with the preceding one, that they should properly form but a single chapter. The vision of temporal prosperity just revealed—peace and security from external oppression—suggests to the prophet's mind a warning that such blessings are God's gifts, to be sought from Him by prayer; and not to be obtained by resorting to idolatrous intercessions and to false teachers. B. C.—The same line of thought is continued, but with the warning that they are to seek their blessing from Jehovah, and not from idols or diviners. And as in old time their shepherds—*i.e.*, their kings, had been their ruin, Jehovah will now be Himself their Shepherd, and under His rule they shall become like a glorious war horse; and out of Judah shall proceed the corner—*i.e.*, the corner stone, upon which the whole building of the State depends, the nail or bracket which supports the most precious articles for use and adornment, the weapons of war for defence, and (not the *oppressor*, as the Authorized Version renders the word, but) the captain or ruler, who shall win for the Jews dominion (verse 4). In the rest of the chapter the happy effects of the union of Ephraim with Judah are described; and whereas in old time they had been scattered among the heathen in punishment, they are now to be sown among them as a blessing, and also because their own land can no longer contain their increasing

numbers, though they are to recover their former boundaries, and possess Gilead and Lebanon as in David's days. R. P. S.

**1. Ask ye of the Lord rain.** The promise of future plenty suggests the mention of the means by which it might then be procured—*viz.*, supplication to Jehovah, and not to idols. *Alp. Nevecome.*—Under the ancient dispensation the Lord gave timely rains and abundant harvests to His people when they were obedient and trustful, and sought Him in prayer. He took care to have them understand this from the outset. (See De. 11:13, 14.) "And it shall come to pass that if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine and thy oil." Hence the prophet says here, "Ask of the Lord rain," it comes for the asking, for the Lord your God hears the prayer of His obedient people. Rain "in the time of the latter rain" was especially useful to perfect the maturing crops. "So the Lord shall give," not "bright clouds," but "lightnings," always portending rain. The Hebrew words translated "showers of rain" imply abundance, "the rain of great rain." H. C.

Zechariah said nearly five hundred years before Christ, "Ask ye for rain in the time of the latter rain." God had promised to give His people the early and the latter rain. But He wanted them to pray for it nevertheless. And sometimes He withheld it because they did not ask for it. And it is so in the spiritual kingdom. He waits to be gracious. He is anxious to bless and to save. He would not have His word return unto Him void, but accomplish that whereunto He has sent it. But He "will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." If, then, we would have showers of blessings upon our congregations, if we would see thousands converted in a day, we must hold pentecostal prayer-meetings. We must ask earnestly, unitedly and perseveringly for the outpouring of the Spirit. *Antioch.*

**2.** All the light that came from these gods and diviners was only darkness; their guidance only misled the people; the hopes they inspired were worse than vain; consequently the whole people were led off in a wrong and ruinous way, going *en masse*, as a flock of sheep follow the lead given them. They were in great affliction (the sense of the word rendered "were

troubled"), because there was no competent and real shepherd. Therefore the Lord comes to the rescue.

4. When the Lord visits Judah in mercy, He gives her the very blessings she needs—good leaders in place of the bad who had been so sore a curse upon her. Hence out of Judah now come forth the "corner-stone" men, good for bearing the weightiest responsibilities: the "nail" men, to hold things in their right place, or to bear great burdens. "The battle bow" are the men skilful in the line of war, but the word rendered "oppressor" does not in this passage imply any injustice, but only an active, vigorous and capable ruler.

6. This conception carries us onward into the Messianic age, and could have its fulfilment in nothing short or less. The recall of the Ten Tribes, in any age subsequent to Zechariah, must, of necessity, be regarded as Messianic, and to be fulfilled only in the New Testament sense. With these principles of interpretation before the mind, this entire passage (verses 6-12) becomes not only clear and free from its otherwise insurmountable difficulties, but rich in Gospel significance and in the fulness of glorious promise for Zion in her latter days.

7-9. "Ephraim" contemplates in its literal sense the Ten Tribes; but in its real prophetic outlook, the ingathering of the nations to Jesus Christ in the Gospel age. A Jew in the time of Zechariah could conceive of no state of things more desirable than the reproducing of the good times of David and Solomon. Hence language and figures are drawn from that state to represent the best condition possible for God's earthly kingdom—the sublimely glorious conquests of peace and victories of love in the latter days. In verse 8 Ephraim comes back with heart full of joy; the Lord lifts up His shrill cry for them, as the keeper of bees whistles for them, and they come to His call. They multiply as of old (Ephraim took His name from the idea of being prolific in population). In verse 9 God will scatter them abroad among the nations, and there, under the moral influence of this affliction, they shall remember the Lord their God and repent of their great sins. So the Lord said by Hosea (2:4), "I will allure her into the wilderness and speak to her heart." H. C.

**I have redeemed them.** In its entire scope and spirit, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, one leading fact is disclosed in this Book of God; one grand idea is affirmed, illustrated, interwoven throughout its extended warp of history, prophecy, psalm, evangel and epistle

—a voluntary redemption by a Divine Redeemer, a deliverance *for man*, fallen and condemned, by an appointed and accomplished Deliverer. This is the single key-thought of all inspired revelation. This gives unity, order, consistency, attractiveness to the whole and to all its parts. Herein is exhibited one and the same Divine Person, the sole Representative of the Godhead in all dispensations represented as the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Christ of the New, the one sole actor for the Godhead in all forms of Divine working, the actual Achiever of every purpose of the Godhead in creation and Providence, in all deeds of judgment and of mercy. But the leading character in which this Divine Person appears through all the revelation is as the *Deliverer*—the great transaction of the inspired records, to which everything beside is tributary, is the deliverance. Pre-eminently is this one and the same Being, the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New exhibited in both testaments as set apart to work deliverance for sinners, and, through preparative and final steps, as actually achieving such deliverance. And in the Apocalypse (Rev. 19:10) the sole surviving apostle, John, affirms this fact with great plainness: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Uttered at the very close of the inspired canon, at the close of the mystic volume, that recites in outline the remaining events of time, it reaches forward as well as backward and covers with its meaning all history yet to be. "The spirit of prophecy"—*i.e.*, the intent and meaning of all inspired disclosure, is to testify of, to make known Jesus, the Christ of God. B.

9. I will sow them among the peoples. Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed into every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5); and as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves into colonies, because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but proselyted to the Jewish religion; now these were sown among the people (Hosea 2:23). And this contributed very much to the spreading of the Gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem fetched thence the Gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those (Acts 2), and the eunuch (Acts 8). And their own synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles were the first receptacles of the apostles and their preaching, wherever they came. Thus when God sowed them among the

people, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, He took care that they should remember him and make mention of His name in far countries ; and by keeping up the knowledge of God among them as He had revealed Himself in the Old Testament, they would be the more ready to admit the knowledge of Christ as He has revealed Himself in the New Testament. II.

10. These words must be understood as historic allusion, and not as specific and literal prediction. The sense is not—I will gather My captives out of Egypt and out of Assyria, but—I will do a similar thing to the great achievement of bringing My people out of Egypt under Moses. I will redeem them from a second Egypt, and save them from a second Assyrian Sennacherib. That only Egypt and Assyria, and not Chaldea, are referred to is explained by the fact that the kingdom of the Ten Tribes had disappeared before the Chaldean came into notice ; hence Ephraim never knew Chaldea as an enemy. Note also that the prophet does not say they shall return to Judah and Jerusalem ; but, to show the enlargement of the Lord's kingdom, He names "Gilead," the extensive region on the east of Jordan, and "Lebanon," on the north, which lay outside the usual boundaries of the tribes of Israel ; and, indeed, he says, "place large enough shall not be found for them." But this has never been fulfilled in the lineal descendants of Abraham, nor can it

ever be. Their numbers, all told to-day, would not meet the demands of this prophecy, interpreted however moderately. We must, therefore, find Israel and Ephraim in that new era of Messiah's kingdom in which there is no distinction of Jew and Greek, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

11. This verse begins with a change of person from the first "I," as in verses 6-10, to the third "He." But "He" must be understood of the same Lord God. The "sea" can be no other than the Red Sea, named by way of historic allusion. The Lord passes through it at the head of His people to achieve a like deliverance to that of the exodus from Egypt.

12. Finally, they shall be made gloriously strong in the Lord, and through His strength alone. So shall they walk up and down, traverse the land at their will, or in their duty, without fear. No harm can befall them since they walk with God. Many parallel passages might be cited from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah, serving to confirm the general interpretation here given, and to show that the prophets harmonize remarkably in these views of the general course of events in the great future of Zion ; and also to show that they give the same sense to individual and special phrases. The reader will find in Isa. 11 : 11-16 a passage remarkably similar to this in all important respects. It is beyond all question *Messianic* ; so must this be also. H. C.

## ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER XI.

11 : 1, 2 OPEN thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, O fir tree, for the cedar is fallen, because the goodly ones are spoiled : howl, O ye oaks of Bashan, 3 for the strong forest is come down. A voice of the howling of the shepherds ! for their glory is spoiled : a voice of the roaring of young lions ! for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. 4, 5 Thus said the LORD my God : Feed the flock of slaughter ; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty ; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD, for I am 6 rich : and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD : but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king ; and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I 7 will not deliver them. So I fed the flock of slaughter, verily the poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves ; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands ; and I fed 8 the flock. And I cut off the three shepherds in one month ; for my soul was weary of them, 9 and their soul also loathed me. Then said I, I will not feed you : that that dieth, let it die ; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off ; and let them which are left eat every one the 10 flesh of another. And I took my staff Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my 11 covenant which I had made with all the peoples. And it was broken in that day : and thus

12 the poor of the flock that gave heed unto me knew that it was the word of the LORD. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my hire; and if not, forbear. So they weighed 13 for my hire thirty *pieces* of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast 14 them unto the potter, in the house of the LORD. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. 15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet again the instruments of a foolish shepherd. 16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek those that be scattered, nor heal that that is broken; neither shall he feed that which is sound, but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and shall tear their hoofs in 17 pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

**Chap. 11.** This chapter contains a prophecy of a very different cast from the foregoing. The people would not always behave as they ought, and therefore would not always be prosperous. Before their final glorious restoration an event of a most calamitous nature was doomed to take place; the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, which is plainly here foretold and ascribed to its proper cause, punishment for notorious wickedness. The flock, meaning God's people, were under the guidance of corrupt and unprincipled pastors, who sacrificed them to their lucrative and ambitious views. The prophet, by God's command, assumes for a while the direction of them, therein becoming a type of Christ, the good Shepherd; but is soon obliged to resign his charge, with mutual dissatisfaction on both sides. He receives thirty pieces of silver as the reward for his services, and casts them, by Divine direction, to the potter. After this the prophet is held forth as the type of a worthless shepherd, or a succession of evil governors, who, heedless of the flock or seeking only to oppress it, at once ruin the flock and bring destruction on themselves. *Blayney.*

If the Book of Zechariah be divided into two portions, the first six chapters being the first division, and the remaining eight the second, then this eleventh will be a digression from the current strain of promised blessings in the second portion, very analogous to the fifth chapter in the first part. As the fifth was interposed for the purpose of moral warning to the careless, apprising them that the judgments of God awaited the guilty, so here this eleventh chapter is interposed for the same purpose. There can be no doubt that it predicts judgments on the covenant people at some period of their history then future. The manner of presenting this truth is very peculiar, essentially that of symbolic vision—a case quite unique in the respect that, in vision only, and not in actuality,

and as personating, not himself, but others, the prophet is required to perform the functions of a shepherd to the Lord's people, considered as His flock. On this theory of interpreting the chapter the best modern commentators are united. Despite of the unique peculiarities of the case, it is generally agreed that the chapter predicts the overthrow of the Jewish state and the ruin of their city and temple, effected by the Romans about A.D. 70, in consequence of their national corruption and of their blind and mad rejection of their Messiah. The prophet, acting the part of a good shepherd (verses 4-14), personates the Messiah Himself. Acting the part of the foolish shepherd (verses 15-17), he personates the scribes and Pharisees of the Saviour's day. The first three verses, wrought up in high poetic imagery, predict the fall of the nation before the Roman arms; while the remaining part of the chapter gives the antecedent moral causes of that fall. Whereas those morally blinded and hardened Jews had said in the madness of their wrath against the spotless Redeemer, "His blood be on us and on our children," on them and on their children His blood did come, and their blood flowed like rivers of water! The Saviour Himself had said, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

1. Lebanon and her lofty cedars represent Jerusalem; her doors the gates of the city.

3. Here the figures turn from inanimate nature to animate. The ornament and glory of the shepherds are their rich pastures—now laid waste. (Cf. Jer. 25:36: "A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock; for the Lord hath spoiled their pasture.") "The pride of Jordan," in which the young lion made his lair, were the dense thickets along his banks. This phrase was already in use by Jeremiah, whom Zechariah follows remarkably in his terms and phrases. (See Jer. 12:5, where the "swelling of Jordan" is

the same original phrase here rendered "pride of Jordan." So also Jer. 49: 19; 50: 44, in all cases said of the thick undergrowth along the Jordan, where the lions had their homes.) The sentiment is here the same as above. All classes of people are in distress, for their choicest treasures are wasted; what they most love and value is in ruins. A poetic imagination seizes on the ruin of individual classes, and by a few striking details gives a vivid conception of the universal desolation.

4. "The flock of the slaughter" means the flock doomed to slaughter for their sins—the Jewish people, now ripe for the fearful retributive judgments of the Almighty.

5. The persons of the drama in this verse are: 1. *The flock*, who are the Jews during the period A.D. 30-70, conceived of as the flock of the Lord's pastures. 2. Their *buyers* ("possessors") and their *sellers*, the Romans. 3. Their *own shepherds*, the priests, scribes and Pharisees, who should have taught them the knowledge of God, but who had no care or pity for their deplorable moral condition. That "they who sell them bless the Lord for their gains," corresponds to the clause, "they are not punished" ("offend not"). They think they are doing God service, and thank Him for the personal selfish good they get as if all were morally right. H. C.

6. *For I will no more pity.* This verse assigns the reason for calling the people "the flock of the slaughter." Nor can words more aptly describe the calamities which befell the Jews, in the war which ended in the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans; when the people, having first by their intestine broils destroyed one another, as is set forth at large by Josephus, at length fell into the hands of him whose predecessor they had owned for their sovereign, "We have no king but Cæsar" (John 19: 15), at the same time that they disclaimed their Messiah; and who completely desolated the land for their rebellion against Him. *Blatancy.*

7. "So then I fed the flock doomed to slaughter because of the poor of the flock"—*i.e.*, out of My pity for the poor ones of the flock—a pertinent and beautiful statement of the labor and love of their own Messiah, who was so often "moved with compassion when He saw the people as sheep having no shepherd." For the proud and self-righteous and for those who were rich toward this world, but not rich toward God, He manifested no specially tender pity; but for the masses who had no shepherd, and especially for the poor, His heart was tenderly touched. In the line of

pure benevolence He rose indefinitely high above all other religious teachers of every age in this: "*He preached the Gospel to the poor.*"

These "staves" were the usual well-known shepherd's *crook*, the only special instrument used by the shepherd; useful to him both in the management of the flock and in repelling its enemies. They represent here those providential agencies by which the Lord aided the pastoral work of the Messiah over His people, as appears from their significant names. The one He called *Grace* (not so properly "Beauty"), but grace in the sense of that Divine favor which restrained hostile heathen nations from assaulting the people of the Lord while they faithfully served Him. The other, "Bands," was a crook of cords, significant of those providential agencies which held the people together in peace. With these aids He acted the part of a shepherd to the flock.

8. Here we must suppose that the prophet takes the number three from precisely those three established orders upon whom the pastoral responsibility of caring under God for the covenant people devolved—priests, prophet and civil magistrates. (See Jer. 2: 8, 26; 18: 18.) Those who represented these classes during our Lord's public ministry must be specially intended here, probably the priests; the scribes in the place of the ancient prophets; and the civil magistrates. The Lord Jesus rejected them from their places of trust, not instantaneously, but very summarily, as "one month" shows. It was the labor of His public life. The history of our Lord's public ministry, in its relation to the scribes, doctors of the law, and Pharisees, shows that He and they had not the least common sympathy. He loathed them, as the Hebrew word implies; He lost all confidence in their moral integrity and even honesty; and, on the other hand, their soul rebelled against Him because of the purity of His character and the fidelity and pungency of His rebukes of their sin.

9. The Messiah abandons the flock, the Jewish people, to the sweep of terrible judgments. "I will be your shepherd no longer." A three-fold judgment shall be your extermination—pestilence; the sword from without; the sword from within—the two last looking toward (1) the Roman arms; (2) those horrible conflicts of hostile parties which made the very strength of the nation its essential weakness and ruin. Let the pestilence sweep away whom it will; let the Roman sword drink the blood of the victims so doomed by the will of the Most High; let every man's teeth be sharpened to devour

his neighbor's flesh. The reality set forth in this prophetic language was fearfully terrific. They had said, "His blood be on us and on our children!" The Lord responded, "So let it be!" Here is the prediction. History verifies it to the letter.

**10.** The first crook, now broken, represented the sundering of the covenant which God is supposed to have made with foreign nations (the sense of "all the people"), to restrain them from harming His chosen. This covenant lay in the Divine mind—His purpose to restrain heathen nations from making war on His people. See the same sense in Hos. 2:18: "In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field," etc.

**11.** The staff once broken, the Roman arms came down upon the land. "Then the poor of the flock," Christ's disciples, having been apprised by Him (Matt. 24:15-21), knew that the hour of judgment for the land had come and fled for safety to the mountains of Pella, on the east of Jordan. History records the remarkable fact that not one Christian Jew fell in that awful carnage. All who had faith in their Divine Lord gave heed to His warnings. The Lord by His special providence gave them ample time to make good their escape before the city was invested by the Roman legions. They fled to Pella in the mountains east of the Jordan, and were all safe. II. C.

**12, 13.** This whole transaction, performed by Zechariah in a vision, was designed to be an exact representation of the several circumstances that attended the betraying of the Messiah by Judas; the price put upon Him by the chief priests, to whom, as the governors of the temple, the money was returned; and the use to which the money was applied. (See Matt. 27:6, 10.) The Jews themselves have expounded this prophecy of the Messiah. *W. Louth.*

The great Shepherd, about to close His services, proposes in the business settlement that they, the Jews, should give Him the wages due. It is not implied by the original words that He fixed the price Himself. "Give Me My price," should rather read, "Give Me My hire or reward." He manifestly left it with them to fix the price. He only said, "Give Me what wages you please, and let Me go." They weighed out thirty pieces of silver, the very price for which Judas betrayed Him, and the usual price for a slave. (See Ex. 21:32.) Maimonides, one of the most reliable ancient Jewish authors, speaks of this as the price of a slave's services, but contemptible for a free man's. The meanness of it indicates how

low they estimated His services. Precisely this is the intended showing of the transaction. "A goodly price," etc., is ironical, and shows how keenly the insult was felt. It has, moreover, a prophetic outlook toward the very deed of Judas. The Lord said, "Cast it to the potter." He did so. This, too, was one of the points of remarkable coincidence between this symbolic prophecy and one of the prominent scenes in the betrayal of his Lord by Judas. It should be noted that Matthew, having stated that Judas, filled with remorse, returned the price of blood (27:3-10), says that the chief priests "bought therewith the potter's field to bury strangers in," which thenceforth bore the name of "the field of blood," and that "then was fulfilled that which was spoken by *Jeremy the prophet*, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field as the Lord appointed Me." These words are not found in the Book of Jeremiah, but the general sense and nearly the same words occur in this passage of Zechariah. How came it to pass that Matthew named Jeremiah instead of Zechariah? It should be considered that Zechariah's words, "the potter," etc., connect his prophecy closely with Jeremiah (chaps. 18, 19). "The potter" of Jeremiah worked down in the valley of the son of Hinnom, as the expressions "go down" and "went down" (Jer. 18:2, 3) render probable, and as the passage (19:2) proves, for here the "east gate" is (in Heb.) "the entrance to the potter's gate." There Jeremiah was to denounce upon the people most solemn threatenings from the Lord, and then break a potter's vessel before them. The place, already made abominable; the breaking of the vessel, significant of a doom for which there can be no remedy; and the fearful solemnity of the message—all conspired to make the associations connected with this potter's house specially solemn and portentous. These things need to be understood in order to get the full sense of this passage in Zechariah. It may be supposed that Matthew had before his mind the full account of Jeremiah as well as the more brief one of Zechariah, and quoting from memory, assigned to the former what is found as to its precise words most nearly in the latter. II. C.

In the quotations of all kinds from the Old Testament in the New Testament we find a continual variation from the *letter* of the older Scriptures. To this variation three causes may have contributed: First, all the New Testa-



ment writers quoted from the Septuagint ; correcting it, indeed, more or less by the Hebrew, especially when it was needful for their purpose ; occasionally deserting it altogether ; still abiding by it to so large an extent as to show that it was the primary source whence their quotations were drawn. Secondly, the New Testament writers must have frequently quoted from memory. Thirdly, combined with this, there was an alteration of conscious or unconscious design. Sometimes the object of this was to obtain increased force (Rom. 14 : 11 ; cf. Isa. 45 : 23, etc.). Sometimes an Old Testament passage is abridged, and in the abridgment so adjusted, by a little alteration, as to present an aspect of completeness, and yet omit what is foreign to the immediate purpose (Acts 1 : 20 ; 1 Cor. 1 : 31). At other times a passage is enlarged by the incorporation of a passage from another source : thus in Luke 4 : 18, 19, although the contents are professedly those read by our Lord from Isa. 61, we have the words "to set at liberty them that are bruised," introduced from Isa. 58 : 6 (LXX.) : similarly in Rom. 11 : 8 ; De. 29 : 4 is combined with Isa. 20 : 10. In some cases still greater liberty of alteration is assumed (Rom. 10 : 11 ; cf. Isa. 28 : 16 ; 49 : 23, etc.). In some places, again, the actual words of the original are taken up, but employed with a new meaning (Heb. 10 : 37 ; cf. Hab. 2 : 3). Almost more remarkable than any alteration in the quotation itself is the circumstance that in Matt. 27 : 9 Jeremiah should be named as the author of this prophecy really delivered by Zechariah : the reason being that the prophecy is based upon that in Jer. 18, 19, and that with-

out a reference to this original source the most essential features of the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy would be misunderstood. *Die. B.*

**14.** The phrase "the brotherhood between Judah and Israel" is a historic allusion to the case of the two nations after the revolt under Jeroboam. Under their mutual relations, brotherhood was peace ; brotherhood broken was civil war. Hence the breaking of this second staff or crook symbolized the withdrawal of those providential agencies which had kept the people together in friendly relations with each other. Those agencies being withdrawn, intestine discord at once broke out, hostile parties arose, and civil war became their most fearful curse. The history of the period, commencing shortly before the invasion by the Romans, and continuing till the city lay in ruins, is a mournful confirmation of this symbolic prophecy.

**15-17.** The object here is to show the character, life and doom of the faithless shepherd, including under this term those priests, scribes and magistrates whom the Good Shepherd cut off "in one month" (verse 8). The judgments on this worthless and wicked shepherd fall on those bodily organs most useful to the shepherd, the arm and the eye. As he *would* not use these in the case of the flock, the Lord withers them utterly and forever. *II. C.*

Since, through the misapplication of his power and his understanding, signified by his "arm" and his "right eye," the flock are subjected to desolation or the sword ; therefore, as of strict justice, he shall be punished with a deprivation at least of those faculties which he so fatally misused. *Blagney.*

## ZECHARIAH, CHAPTERS XII., XIII.

**12 : 1** THE burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

Thus saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him : Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling unto all the peoples round about, and upon Judah also shall it be in the siege against Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples ; all that burden themselves with it shall be sore wounded ; and all the nations of the earth shall be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness : and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the peoples with blindness. And the chieftains of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the chieftains of Judah like a pan of fire among wood, and like a torch of fire among sheaves ; and they shall devour all the peo-

ples round about, on the right hand and on the left : and Jerusalem shall yet again dwell in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem be not magnified above Judah. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem : and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David ; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication : and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced : and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart ; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the Shimeites apart, and their wives apart ; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

**13:1** In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered : and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass that, when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live ; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD : and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he prophesieth : neither shall they wear a hairy mantle to deceive : but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground ; for I have been made a bondman from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds between thine arms ? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

**7** Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts : smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered ; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die ; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried : they shall call on my name, and I will hear them : I will say, It is my people : and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

THE closing section—12-14—is entitled “The burden of the word of Jehovah for Israel.” *Israel* here is the nation at large, not Israel as distinct from Judah. The prophet beholds the near approach of troublous times, when Jerusalem should be hard pressed by enemies. But in that day Jehovah shall come to save them, and all the nations which gather themselves against Jerusalem shall be destroyed. At the same time the deliverance shall not be from outward enemies alone. God will pour out upon them a spirit of grace and supplications. There shall be a deep and true repentance (12: 1-13: 6). Then follows a short apostrophe to the sword of the enemy to turn against the shepherds of the people ; and a further announcement of searching and purifying judgments. The prophecy closes with a grand and stirring picture (chap. 14). All nations are gathered together against Jerusalem ; and seem al-

ready sure of their prey. Half of their cruel work has been accomplished, when Jehovah Himself appears on behalf of His people. He goes forth to war against the adversaries of His people. He establishes His kingdom over all the earth. All nations that are still left shall come up to Jerusalem, as the great centre of religious worship, and the city from that day forward shall be a holy city. *Dic. B.*

**Chap. 12.** This chapter manifestly opens a new subject. The first leading inquiry should respect its general scope and spirit, and the period of time to which it relates. In chap. 11 the Jews of our Saviour's time reject Him, their offered Messiah, and bring upon their city and nation an avalanche of ruin. Now the question may be supposed to arise, Is the kingdom of the Messiah therefore utterly broken down ? To this inquiry, chaps. 12, 13 reply : By no means. The Lord has yet a “Judah,”

and a "Jerusalem," and a "House of David." He will redeem them from their external enemies (see 12 : 2-9) ; and what is yet more to the purpose, He will pour upon them a spirit of grace, supplication and penitence, which shall make them in a far higher and nobler sense His people, and shall insure their glorious prosperity as His people and kingdom.

There is manifestly a close analogy between the order of subjects in the first six chapters (made up of a series of visions) on the one hand, and chaps. 7-14 (not such visions) on the other. As chaps. 1-4 promise good to Zion, so do chaps. 7-10. As chap. 5, on the other hand, predicts the sin and doom of the guilty, so does chap. 11 ; and then as chap. 6 : 1-8 returns again to God's loving care and protection of His people, and specifically as manifested against hostile nations, so does this chap. 12, and also chap. 14. As the last part of chap. 6 is eminently Messianic, predicting also the ultimate reception of the nations into His kingdom, so we find the same idea in these chaps. 12-14, and especially in chap. 14. Manifestly we are in chap. 12 borne on beyond the date of chap. 9, for there the Lord was protecting His people against Alexander and His Syrian successors ; here against "all nations" (verses 2, 3, 9) ; and, moreover, here we have passed the crucifixion of Christ (which is essentially involved in chap. 11), for the people bewail their guilt in that act (see verse 10). The location of these events *in time* must therefore be onward, after the advent of Messiah.

It is a question of no trifling importance whether the terms "Israel," "Judah," "Jerusalem," "the house of David," are to be taken here literally or figuratively. Is "Judah" in these chapters (12-14) the very Judah of Zechariah's time ; are her people the lineal descendants of Abraham ; and does the lineal Jew here, as then and there, represent and embody the earthly kingdom of God ? Is Jerusalem still, as of old, her capital, and the centre and throne of Messiah's kingdom ? Do the Gentile hosts besiege her literally, as the Chaldeans had done so recently when Zechariah was writing ? I cannot think so, for these reasons : 1. With the events predicted (chap. 11), the literal Judah and Jerusalem ceased to be the recognized visible Church and kingdom of God on earth. It is the precise purpose of chap. 11 to affirm this fact. Consequently, ever since the apostolic age, Church history has taken on a new type. No Church historian thinks of looking for the Christian Church in the Jewish line. 2. What-

ever Old Testament prophecy is clearly shown to refer to the New Testament age must, by all legitimate rules of interpretation, be construed in accordance with New Testament light, with Gospel ideas, with the new principles of Messiah's kingdom, then first fully brought out. Hence the Judah and Jerusalem of Gospel prophecy, standing as types and symbols of Messiah's kingdom, must be construed, not literally, but figuratively—just as "the temple" is no longer, as of old, the one place of God's dwelling, and of all acceptable worship, but the Christian "temple" is the living pious heart. 3. That the Jews shall return again to *Judaism* restored after the order of Moses ; that Jerusalem shall again become the living centre of all visible worship, and of all the true religion of the world—this worship conforming itself, as of old, to the Mosaic ritual ; and that, as such, Judah shall be invaded and Jerusalem besieged by all the Gentile nations of the earth, according to the literal construction of chaps. 12, 14, are not things even supposable. If the New Testament is held to be of any account, Judaism, after the order of Moses, is dead, and those ideas must hence be rejected. For, practically, that state of things must ignore all the Christianity of the Gentile world—all the actual Christianity of the whole world as it now is, and as it has been since the death of Christ. Can any sane man believe that all the Gentile Christian churches are at some future period to be annihilated ; the religious world be put back to its condition and relations as in the age of Zechariah ; bloody sacrifices and passovers and feasts of tabernacles be restored, and Judah and Jerusalem stand as the sole representatives of the Church of God upon the earth ? Or can it be believed that all the great nations of the present or of any future age shall gather in one vast crusade against the converted Christian Jews in their own land to besiege Jerusalem, and to exterminate all true religion from the face of the earth ? The literal construction of chaps. 12-14 would hold us to such results ; therefore the literal construction must be promptly rejected. 4. Nor let it be thought that we do violence to the laws of language when we reject the literal and adopt the figurative sense under such circumstances as these. Let the reader ask himself, How *should* a Jewish prophet, writing in the midst of Judaism, with no other history of the Church before him, and no other conception of the Church in his mind but that of Judaism, with no other first readers but Jews, write of the future Church and kingdom of God in the Gospel age ? Shall we demand that he write of the Christian

Church and of millennial times in New Testament words and phrases, and with fully developed New Testament ideas? Let us remember that the time had not come for such ideas. Let us recall the striking fact that more than three years' personal communion with Jesus Himself, and no small amount of His personal labor, quite failed to convert His disciples from Jewish to Christian ideas; that only the shock given to the old system by His death, aided by the subsequent teaching of the Holy Ghost, availed, and then rather slowly, to effect this great change. How absurd, then, to expect that the Hebrew prophets and their first readers could readily reach those new ideas and take in the sense of Christian as contrasted with Jewish phraseology! Plainly, those Jewish prophets and their first readers must think of Christianity only as of Judaism extended and purified; must conceive of a world converted only as a world coming up to Jerusalem to worship; and must conceive of irreligion, infidelity, every form of hostility to Christ, as the gathering of nations for war against Jerusalem and Judah, to crush them from the face of the earth. Hence when we speak of Jewish costume and drapery as clothing Gospel ideas in these sublimely grand and glorious prophecies, we are not parting company with common sense. We are simply interpreting in harmony with the stern necessities of their condition. Jewish minds, with no other than Jewish training, *must* think so and speak so, by the inevitable laws of human thought.

Consequently, it is no longer a question whether, in these remaining prophecies of Zechariah (chaps. 12-14), we are to find blessings for the Gentile world; even the extension of the Gospel to all the nations of the earth. If these prophecies relate to times subsequent to the death of Christ, they *must* predict the prosperity of the Christian Church, the conversion of the world to Immanuel. It might be a much more difficult question (were it needful to be settled) whether the lineal Jew is here, and if so, where and by what marks we shall identify him. If he were named here alongside of his brother Gentile, as Paul names them in Rom. 11, it would be easy to make this discrimination. But it is at least supposable that in the greater part of these three chapters there is no intention to discriminate between Jew and Gentile. If so, how can it be expected that a discreet interpreter should make any distinction? Interpreters should not be asked to *make* prophecy, nor to put into it what was not there before; but only to unfold the sense already

there. It may be well to remember also that the change wrought in the transition from Judaism to Christianity, fitly described as a "breaking down of the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14), aimed not to thrust the Jew out, but to let the Gentile in; to abolish henceforth all distinction as to Christian rights and privileges, and make both one henceforth in Christ Jesus. Why, then, may not Old Testament prophecy assume precisely this state of the future kingdom of the Messiah?

Chap. 12 is naturally in two parts, of which the first (verses 1-9) represents Judah as invaded and Jerusalem as besieged by the combined powers of all nations; but the Lord delivers them. The second part (verses 10-14) represents the house of David and the people of Jerusalem as deeply penitent for their sins, especially the sin of crucifying their Messiah.

1. This prophecy is a "*burden upon Israel*" only to a limited extent, for the assault of all nations upon her and the siege of Jerusalem were transient, ending soon in complete victory on Zion's side. That help comes from the Lord alone, who is mighty to save, is indicated by the allusion to His great and glorious works of creation. H. C.

*Which stretcheth forth the heavens, etc.* This solemn assertion of the creative power of Jehovah is an implicit claim to Divine inspiration. He who has done such wonders in creation has *power* to give effect to the words spoken by His prophet and messenger. (Cf. Isa. 42:5; 44:24; Jer. 10:12, 13; Amos 4:13; 9:6.) B. C.

2. All the nations are thought of as gathered against Judah and Jerusalem. In the last clause the sense is, that what the Lord had said of Jerusalem should be true of Judah also in the siege of her capital. H. C.

3. *In that day.* When the enemies of Judah and Jerusalem shall be brought to judgment; and their designs against the city and people of Jehovah frustrated. B. C.—Jerusalem is compared to a stone of great weight, which, being too heavy for those who attempt to lift it up or remove it, falls back upon them and crushes them to pieces. *Blatney.*

4. The warring enemies of God's people come on horses, this animal being associated with human pride and rebellion against God. This astonishment and madness are among the effects of the cup of intoxication given to God's enemies to drink. Note the beautiful antithesis. God smites with blindness the warring powers of His foes, but opens His own eyes wide on His people to see and provide for their wants.

**5-7.** Only the Lord will make Judah safe and mighty against her foreign foes, as a hearth of fire to its fuel, which itself burns not, but only facilitates the burning of the wood, or as a torch of fire to a sheaf, which consumes it with no danger to itself. So shall they devour the gathered nations who assail them. The Lord saves Judah *first* that He may forestall the pride of self-reliance on the strength and glory of the city. So vital to true religion is it to crucify all human glorying, to cherish the spirit of absolute dependence on the Lord alone, and to give Him forevermore all the glory as the source of all spiritual life and of all power for good to Zion.

**8.** The Lord defends Jerusalem, yet not without their own concurrent agency. The doctrine that God saves His people must not be abused to human inaction. He saves rather by augmenting and reanimating their strength than by superseding their agency. So here, the feeble shall be as David, who is the type of a most athletic warrior; and the men of David's cast and power shall be now as God, even as the angel of Jehovah—the uncreated one who had so often appeared in forms of majesty and power. This is a strong figure, and must represent a vast augmentation of spiritual force in the people of God.

**10.** These terms are strongly in contrast with those in verse 9. God will seek to *pour out* vengeance and ruin on those hostile nations; but grace, mercy and blessings on Jerusalem. To "pour out" is to bestow in large and abundant measure. It is the usual phrase for the effusions of the Holy Spirit, as in Joel 2:28, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." In this passage, "the Spirit" is the Holy Spirit of God, and not a quality or grace in man. It is thought of, however, as producing piety and prayer in the hearts of men, and hence is called "the Spirit of grace and of supplications"—meaning that Divine Spirit, whose special work it is to beget as to one's self a tender, prayerful frame of mind, and as to others a loving compassion for the souls of men, and earnest prayer for their salvation. "*Grace*" in man stands for that which is specially pleasing to God, and which secures His favor. In the case of sinners, the first buddings of grace are penitence and prayer, a broken and contrite spirit, which inspires prayer both for our own pardon and for mercy on other sinners also. The close connection between the gift of this Spirit, begetting such grace and supplications, and the "looking upon Him whom they have pierced," shuts us up to this sense of the pas-

sage—its leading thought being the conversion of sinners. To "look on Me whom they have pierced" can mean nothing else than thinking of their guilt in crucifying the Lord of glory. They now look upon the Crucified One with bitter penitence and grief for the sin of piercing His heart, and with imploring cries for pardon. Thousands have felt this bitterness of grief for their sins against the Crucified One, made doubly keen by the sense of His enduring and forgiving love, despite of guilt so black and ingratitude so vile! This mourning for sin is as when one mourns over an only son, lost in death; its bitterness is as that over a first-born. H. C.

The speaker here must be the great God Himself; for He says in the beginning of the verse, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications;" and who can send down this Spirit from heaven but the great King of heaven, the everlasting Jehovah? What prophet or angel would dare to say that he would send Him? But then we read here that He who thus pours forth the Spirit has been "pierced;" and this represents Him in another and lower character, as a creature, a vulnerable man. And by this seeming contradiction, the text discovers to us at once who is speaking to us. It is the Lord Jesus Christ; He who is God and man in one flesh; He who is so high that He can give the Holy Spirit to whomsoever He pleases, and who was once so low that the vilest arm on the earth might wound Him; and wounded He was. "They pierced My hands and My feet," He says. John settles this point beyond all dispute. "One of the soldiers," he says, "with a spear pierced His side;" and then he immediately tells us why he was allowed of God to do so—that this very Scripture should be fulfilled, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." C. Bradley.

*I will pour the Spirit.* There are, perhaps, none of us who do not know from personal experience that ever and anon there come to the soul times of visitation—hours of softened feeling and deepened thoughtfulness, when the things of time lose their hold upon us, and the eternal world rolls nearer, with all its grand realities, to the Spirit's eye. And are not these the springtides of the soul, the seasons propitious to the spiritual husbandry, every moment of which gathers round it the importance of that eternal harvest to which the rapid hours are bringing us? Are not these, in one word, the times when the spiritual gales blow freshest

and fairest from the heavens, and the soul, instinct with life, feels every expanded energy yielding to the almost sensible impulses of the Spirit of Truth and Love? How precious such moments! Who that reflects on their worth would not long and pray and watch for their coming, and, while they continue, strain every energy to catch to the last breath the blessing which they bring? *Caird.*

The prophet declares that the future restoration of the communion of the covenant people with the Lord will be effected on His part by the outpouring of the spirit of grace and supplication, and on that of the people by contrition and repentance. Thus much is clear in this much misused passage, that the piercing of one, in whose person the Lord is as it were Himself pierced, is spoken of. The pierced One must be one who may be likened to King Josiah, with whom, when he was mortally wounded in the valley of Megiddo, the last hope of the nation fell. And who else can this be than that Shepherd and fellow of Jehovah, who, according to 13: 7, fell by the sword after the last effort of deliverance which God made through Him had proved vain, nay, had been shamefully requited (11: 4-14). Justice was so far done to the Messianic interpretation by the older Jewish theology, that since the acknowledgment of a suffering and dying son of David could not from its standpoint be conceded, it invented for this passage a second Messiah, "the Messiah, the son of Joseph," who was to fall in the conflict with Gog and Magog. *O.*

*They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.* John plainly quotes these words (chap. 19: 37) and applies them to our blessed Saviour, of whom alone they can be understood, for none could speak them but One who was both God and man. That He was God is plain from the former part of the verse, "I will pour upon the house of David . . . the spirit of grace and of supplications;" for the spirit of grace is not at the disposal of any creature, and it is only in the power of God to bestow it. That He was man appears from the following words, "Me whom they have pierced;" for if He had not been man He would not have been capable of being pierced by them. These words therefore were spoken by Christ, the only person in the world that ever was or pretended to be both God and man. *Bp. Beveridge.*

The Jews themselves have applied this text to the Messiah. David before described His sufferings under the figure of "piercing His hands and His feet" (Ps. 22: 16); and Isaiah

foretold He should be "wounded for our transgressions" (chap. 53: 5). *W. Louth.*

In these words, as applied by the apostle, reference is made by the prophetic spirit of Jesus as the Incarnate Son, very God and very man (John 19: 34; Rev. 1: 7). "They shall look upon Me . . . they shall mourn for Him." In Isaiah mention is made of His death, but not by whom He is slain; here it is ascribed to His own people. *Andreas.*

*Whom they have pierced.* John applies this passage to the piercing of the side of our Lord upon the cross, and to the attractive power which the spectacle of Christ crucified exercises upon "all kindreds of the earth," when those who have pierced Him with their sins turn to Him in contrition and faith, and look to Him as the Israelites looked upon the brazen serpent, and were saved. *B. C.*

The "consummation of the ages" was reached in the crucifixion of the Son of God. The sacrifice of atonement among the Jews summarized and gave efficacy to all the rest. In that great rite the high priest gathered up and carried forward through the veil, and to a result, the divers services which otherwise had been incipient and incomplete. The liturgic element in Abel's sacrifice; the covenant in Abraham's; the redemption in the Passover lamb; the propitiatory in the "sin offering" of the outer court—all blend and are crowned in the "great day" of Israel's atonement. So Christ becomes "temple," "altar," "high priest," "veil," and "offering," "all and in all." Abel, Melchizedek and Aaron—bullock, scapegoat and incense—so unlike in themselves, contribute their single elements to an accordant harmony in one cross, in which all contradictions are reconciled. *J. B. T.*

With the Christian believer, at the feet of "Christ crucified," will the Jew yet find a place to bow, in brokenness of heart, and in humbled and lively faith, and obtain pardon, peace and salvation. His nation, with all the Gentile nations—blessed be God, whose promises fail not!—shall yet be assembled around the cross of Christ Jesus. They whose fathers said, "Away with Him! away with Him! crucify Him! crucify Him!" and imprecated His blood upon themselves and upon their children, through infinite grace shall yet behold and rejoice in His as "a name which is above every name," "Immanuel, God with us;" and in Christ Jesus, shining in glory unspeakable to their eyes, even as He who is "called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." *Anon.*

It is true of us all as sinners, we have pierced Christ ; inasmuch as our sins were the cause of His death, for He was wounded for our transgressions, and they are the grief of His soul ; He is broken with the defiant heart of sinners, who therefore are said to crucify Him afresh and put Him to open shame. Those that truly repent of sin look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced, who was pierced for their sins, and is pierced by them ; and this engages them to look unto Him as those that are deeply concerned for Him. This is the effect of their looking to Christ, it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified ; when they heard it, they who had had a hand in piercing Him were pricked to the heart and cried out, "What shall we do?" It is fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort : they look to Christ and mourn for Him, not so much for His sufferings as for their own sins that procured them. The genuine sorrows of a penitent soul flow from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort. II.

Repentance is the recognition by the fallen self of its true self in Christ. As the touched and troubled heart listens to the story of that beautiful life ; as there rises before the spirit's quickened eye the vision of a Perfect Innocence in human form, of a sublime purity with which no alloy of sternness mingles, a mental and moral elevation in which no trace of self-consciousness can be detected, a piety rapt as an angel's combined with the unassuming simplicity of a child, as we ponder the narrative of a life of holiest fellowship with God, maintained amid incessant toil and intercourse with men, a life of persistent self-sacrifice, undimmed by one thought of personal ease or one act of selfish indulgence—a life in which love, tender as a mother's, grew more fervent amid ingratitude, waxed stronger and deeper amid insults and wrongs received at the very hands of its objects ; in one word, as inspiration summons up to the awakened mind the spectacle of a perfectly holy human life, the deepest instincts of our nature are stirred to discern herein its own lost ideal. *Caird.*

If there is one prediction which might drive the expectant sinner to a pillow of thorns and a couch of agony, it is, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced." As a God they cannot escape His searching gaze, or shake His firm justice, or overthrow His invincible power, or contradict His everlasting love. As a

man, they shall see that He condemns them with all the stirrings of a brother's heart. As a Saviour, "they shall look on Him whom they have pierced," and it will be the bitterness of that wrath under which they sink, that it is the wrath of a bleeding Lamb. *W. B. Homer.*

**11.** *The mourning of Hadadrimmon.* Most probably the general mourning for the death of the good King Josiah, who was slain in the valley of Megiddo (2 K. 23 : 29 ; 2 Chron. 35 : 22-24). Hadadrimmon is said by Jerome to have been a place near Jezreel. The mourning for Josiah became a proverb for a public and solemn lamentation. Such a national humiliation, it is here said, shall the Jews observe for having crucified the Messiah. *Blayney.*

**12.** This is so much a personal matter, lying between each individual soul and his Saviour, that each one is drawn to weep and mourn apart and alone. Every instinct leads the mourner to seek solitude and to pour out his whole heart there under no other eye than God's. The mode of presenting this thought is by Jewish terms and historic allusions. The house of David and the house of Nathan, one of his sons, in the royal line ; then the house of Levi and the house of Shimei, one of his sons, representing the priesthood ; these stand for the whole people, and show that they all mourn apart, and their wives apart. The first verse of the next chapter belongs with this, showing that such penitence and prayer bring pardon full and free.

**Chap. 13.** The first verse belongs very properly to the previous chapter, since it stands in the closest relations of thought with the penitence of the people for their sin against the Lord Jesus. The next point made is the *purifying* of the people from their sins, as shown by specifying two most besetting sins of the ancient Hebrews, idolatry and false prophesying, both of which are thoroughly removed from the land (verses 2-6). Then, by association of ideas, the crucified Messiah is brought to view (verse 7) ; finally, the ungodly portion are cut off, only one-third part remaining, but these are purified by stern discipline, and come to know Jehovah as their God (verses 8, 9). *H. C.*

**1.** It is a fountain opened ; for whoever will may come and take the benefit of it ; it is opened not only to the house of David, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great ; or it is opened for all believers who as the spiritual seed of Christ are of the house of David, and as living members of the Church are inhabitants

of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are washed from their sins in His blood, that they may be made to our God kings and priests (Rev. 1 : 5, 6). II.

This Fountain is open still. Fresh, efficacious, and free as on the day when His mighty sacrifice was offered, the merit of Immanuel still continues. I need not explain that this Fountain is not literal. It is not the water of baptism ; it is not the wine of the Lord's Supper ; it is not the literal blood of the Saviour, for neither baptismal water nor sacramental wine can wash away sin, nay, nor the actual blood of Christ, understood in a corporal or carnal sense. But the Fountain must be sought in the written Word—in the testimony, which God gives concerning His Son—in such sayings as these : "The blood (*i.e.*, the atonement) of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "Come and let us reason together. God hath sent forth His Son, a propitiation for sin." This truth concerning Jesus, published in the Bible, is the Fountain opened to the world—the man who believes that truth is the man who has his sins washed away. And what I pray you to realize and remember is, that the Divine atonement of Jesus is of exhaustless value and unfading virtue, and is this moment as dear to God as the day when it first was finished. You that have faith in the Fountain, *frequent it*. Beware of two errors which are very natural and very disastrous. Beware of thinking any sin too great for it ; beware of thinking any sin too small. There is not a sin so little but it may be the germ of everlasting perdition ; there is not a sin so enormous but a drop of atoning blood will dissolve it as utterly as if it were drowned in the depths of the sea. *Hamilton.*

God does not tell us whether the fountain opened in the house of Judah, for sin and for uncleanness, sends forth its healing streams to other worlds than our own. But He tells us that the atonement itself, known, as it is, among the myriads of the celestial, forms the high song of eternity ; that the Lamb who was slain is surrounded by the acclamations of one wide and universal empire ; that the might of His wondrous achievements spreads a tide of gratulation over the multitudes who are about His throne ; and there never ceases to ascend from the worshippers of Him who washed us from our sins in His blood a voice loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blessed voices uttering joy, when heaven rings jubilee and loud hosannas fill the eternal regions. *T. Chalmers.*

2. To show that the land is purified from its

great sins, He makes no general statements, but simply individualizes two of the prominent and most dangerous sins of the covenant people—idolatry and false prophecy—and represents them to be effectually exterminated. "Cutting off the very names of idols, so that they should be no more remembered," implies that idolatry is thoroughly expelled from the land. (See Hos. 2 : 17 ; 14 : 8 ; Micah 5 : 12-14.) The "prophets" named here in connection with idols before and "the unclean spirit" after must be *false* prophets, called prophets only because they falsely and foully assumed this name. The Lord will drive them out of the land, forcibly expel them. The reference to an "unclean spirit" recognizes Satanic agency.

5, 6. He means to show that his position in life has been such as should remove all suspicion of his playing the false prophet. He has been held as a servant all his days. But there are palpable marks on his person that convict him of lying even now ; hence, one replies to him, "What mean those gashes on your hands ?" He can only confess the truth : "They were inflicted by my associates according to the custom of idol worshippers, in their temples." The word rendered "friends" means properly lovers ; but is used in the bad sense, and here of his fellow-idolaters involved like himself in this harlotry to which the word "lovers" refers. Jewish as well as profane history shows clearly that cutting the flesh was common in idol worship. (See 1 K. 18 ; Jer. 16 : 6 ; 41 : 5 ; De. 14 : 1.) The common idea of penance may be supposed to lie at the bottom of such practices ; a consciousness of guilt ; the demands of remorse ; coupled with the notion that the gods will exact some suffering for such sins, and hence each man had best inflict it upon himself rather than leave it for the gods to inflict. II. C.

7. *Awake, O sword, etc.* O thou, My sword of affliction, awake, arise and smite Him that is nearest and dearest unto Me ; even Him that is My coequal and coeternal Son, the image of Me, the invisible God, saith the Lord of Hosts ; smite thou this great Shepherd of My Church ; and His sheep, His disciples and followers shall be scattered, and shall both forsake Him and be severed from each other ; for even against those disciples also, as well as against their Master, will I stir up enmity and opposition in the world. *Bp. Hall.*—Here begins a new prophecy, importing that the Messiah, the great Shepherd, as He is described in this prophecy (chap. 11 : 4 ; Isa. 40 : 11 ; Ezek. 34 : 23), though with respect to His Divine nature He be "equal with



God" the Father (Phil. 2 : 6), yet shall be delivered up to death by God's determinate council and appointment. (See Acts 2 : 23 ; 4 : 28.)

*H. Loeth.*

"Awake" (as if it had been asleep, at rest, "awake against My Shepherd" (the Messiah), described here as being "the man that is My nearest friend"—for such is the sense of the word rendered "My fellow." This word occurs elsewhere only in the Pentateuch, and there in such passages as Lev. 6 : 2 ; 19 : 11, 15, 17 ; 25 : 15, etc., "Ye shall not lie nor deceive each man his near friend," etc. "If a man lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or hath deceived his neighbor," etc. This usage shows that the word is used for the nearest human relationship, not involving consanguinity. It, therefore, well expresses the relation between the Father and the Son, when He is thought of as incarnate—in His human nature. This human nature of Jesus stood in this close relation to the Father. The bold metaphor, "Awake, O sword," etc., has its analogy in Jer. 47 : 6, 7 : "O thou sword of the Lord, how long ere thou wilt be quiet ? Put up thyself into thy scabbard ; rest and be still." This sword of the Lord is the Lord's executioner. So in our passage the Lord of Hosts commands the sword to its work, remarkably recognizing the Divine agency in the death of the Lamb of God. II. C.

Who is this Shepherd and Fellow of Jehovah ? It might perhaps be any one who helps Him in the care of His flock. But the Lord's words applying it to Himself show that, as in earlier passages of this prophet, it has its especial fulfilment in Him. He is the rejected Shepherd, He is the Man, the Fellow of God, *Andreas*.

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd." These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of His justice to awake against His Son, when He had voluntarily made His soul an offering for sin ; for it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and put Him to grief ; and He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted (Isa. 53 : 4, 10). Observe : 1. How He calls Him. As God, He is My Fellow ; for He thought it no robbery to be equal with God, He and the Father are one. He was from eternity by Him, as one brought up with Him, and in the work of man's redemption He was His Elect, in whom His soul delighted and the counsel of peace was between them both. As Mediator, He is My Shepherd, that great and good Shepherd that undertook to feed the flock (chap. 11 : 7). He is the Shepherd that

was to lay down His life for the sheep. 2. How He uses Him : Awake, O sword, against Him. If He will be a sacrifice, He must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life blood, there was no remission. Men thrust Him through as a foolish shepherd ; God thrust Him through as the Good Shepherd (cf. verse 3), that He might purchase the flock of God with His own blood (Acts 20 : 28 ; for Messiah the Prince must be cut off, but not for Himself (Dan. 9 : 26). This sword must awake against Him ; He having no sin of His own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to Him of itself, till by particular order from the Judge of all it was warranted to brandish itself against Him. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world in the decree and counsel of God ; but the sword designed against Him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake and smite Him ; for God spared not His own Son. II.

Let Divine and infinite justice turn itself which way it will, it finds One that can tell how to match it. For if it say, "I will require the satisfaction of man," there is a man to satisfy its cry ; and if it say, "But I am an infinite God, and must and will have an infinite satisfaction," here is One also that is infinite, even "fellow" with God ; fellow in His essence and being ; fellow in His power and strength ; fellow in His wisdom ; fellow in His mercy and grace, together with the rest of the attributes of God. So that, let justice turn itself which way it will, here is a complete person and a complete satisfaction. *Bungay*.

It was when, fresh from the celebration of the paschal feast and His own supper, He had retired with His disciples, under the shade of night, to the Mount of Olives : "Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night : for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Matt. 26 : 31). So it had been written in Zech. 13 : 7, respecting that peculiar Shepherd and His flock, who was to be Jehovah's fellow, or rather His near relation—for so the word in the original imports ; and hence, when spoken of any one's relation to God, it cannot possibly denote a mere man, but can only be understood of one who, by virtue of His Divine nature, stands on a footing of essential equality with God. All other interpretations, whether by Jews or Christians, can only be regarded as shifts, devised to explain away or get rid of the plain meaning of the prophecy. And it was here more especially

chosen by our Lord, as, more distinctly and emphatically perhaps than any other prediction in Old Testament Scripture, it combined with the peerless dignity of Christ's nature the fearful depth of His humiliation and suffering; and so was at once fitted to instruct and comfort the disciples in respect to the season of tribulation that was before them. *P. Fairbairn.*

This wondrous cry was obeyed. The sword awoke against the Man, God's fellow. It was "bathed in heaven." And now no more is the cry raised, "Awake, O sword." Against the people of God it is sheathed forever. Yet shall this dread moment never be forgotten. For even as in the glad valleys of earth, when sunshine is resting on the landscape, the sound of thunder heard remote only enhances the sense of security and deepens the feeling of repose, so in the climes of heaven's day shall the memory of that hour so dark and that cry so fearful be to the souls of the ransomed a joy forever. *Giffilan.*

7. *And I will turn My hand upon the little ones.* The same hand turned itself back to protect and bless "the poor of the flock that waited on Me," as they are described, chap. 11: 11. A few of the Jewish people received Jesus as their Messiah, became His disciples while He lived or converts to His faith after His death, and these became objects of His special care and love. The connection of this verse with the one immediately preceding falls under the law of association of ideas. The close analogy between the false prophet, whose hands had been gashed and pierced "in the house of his friends," and the Messiah, whose hands were pierced in a death by crucifixion among those who ought to have been His friends, suggested the latter case, and led the prophet to speak of it here. This accounts for its coming in here *out of place* in the sense of being both aside from the general course of thought in this chapter and out of its chronological order—His violent death having been assumed in chap. 11, and certainly thought of as already past in 12: 10; 13: 1. This renewed allusion to it is therefore due to the power of this law of suggestion. H. C.

"He turns His hand upon the little ones." Nothing less than this is His own promise by the mouth of one of His servants, who paints graphically the blessings of Christ's reign. *How amazing is this promise of God when we contemplate this hand in its omnipotence, and think at the same time on our own utter insigni-*

*ficance, our deep unworthiness, our woeful weakness! Almost before we are aware how low and lost is our condition, the outstretched hand of God presents itself, at once a token and a pledge of communion, strengthening and guidance. What need we more than the clear certainty, that He thus turns His hand on us, as evidence that there dwells no longer in His mind the thought of wrath and vengeance against us? In communion with Him conscience becomes pacified; in His strength we can accomplish all things, even the most difficult; under His guidance we go trustingly forward.* *Van O.*

8. *Two parts therein shall be cut off and die.* The severe judgments, foretold by our Saviour (Matt. 24), shall consume two parts in three of the nation; but a third part shall escape the general destruction and be left to be dispersed over the world to preserve a posterity to future generations. W. Louth.

8, 9. The primary sense of these verses is clear. Over all the land two parts out of three are cut off and die; the third part remaining is purified through the fires of earthly discipline. These become far more fully than before the people of the living God. H. C.

9. We have here, first, the trials, and then the triumphs, of the Christian Church, and of all the faithful members of it. I will bring that third part through the fire of affliction, and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive Church, the fiery trial which tried the people of God then (1 Pet. 4: 12). Those whom God sets apart for Himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world; they must be tried that their faith may be found to praise and honor. H.

It would seem as if even Omnipotence could not sanctify a fallen and sinful spirit without the employment of sorrow. It would seem that there is in every believer a certain dross which nothing except the furnace can dissipate—on every character certain stains which nothing but the sharp solvent, the severe corrosive of affliction can expunge. But in applying these painful processes, oh, how tender and sympathetic the Saviour is! He does not break the bruised reed. He apportions the trial to the exigency; and, mindful of the hour when He drank the Father's cup and an angel from heaven strengthened Him, in handing to each disciple the cup of needful trial, His arm of omnipotent kindness encircles and supports the fatigued or fainting soul. And it is a glo-

rious infirmity which thus brings into the spirit "the power of Christ." *Hamilton.*

Fiery trials make the lustre of faith appear most, as gold shines brightest in the furnace; and if any dross be mixed with it, it is refined and purged from it by these trials, and so it remains by the fire purer than before. And thus the fire of suffering is the advantage of believers, both trying the excellency of faith, giving evidence of it, what it is, and also purifying it from earth and drossy mixtures and making it more excellently what it is; raising it to a higher pitch of resignedness and worth. In these fires, as faith is tried, the word on which faith relies is tried, and is found *all gold*, most precious. *Leighton.*

It would seem that if there be one element of this human life more needful than another for the *perfecting* of a sanctifying fellowship between the Saviour and the soul, it is the element of *suffering*. Therefore it is the unchanging law that we "bear about with us in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"—that we "die daily" in Him—that we are "killed all the day long." By such dying, nourishment is sent down to the very roots of life. Penitence feeds purity. The pangs exalt the joys. The dearest love tryst is often kept in a pavilion whose curtains are darkness, whose threshold is pain, whose "inhabitant" says daily, "I am sick." Many a one—blessed be His name!—in hard toil, or in sore disaster, or in constant pain, or (sadder yet) in a constant sorrow, can say, "All is good and well. I find 'treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places.' I am 'winning Christ.' This is 'the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings,' from which in due time fellowship in glory will arise." *A. Redigh.*

Slowly, and as it may seem to us quite imperceptibly, is God bringing this Divine work to completion in us. Blessed are they who shrink not from the sharper but not less needed means of its accomplishment, those trials and chastisements, those humiliations and self denials, which are the pangs of transformation through which Christ is to be fully formed within us. "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." "The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows," wrote Michael Angelo. And impossible as it will be for nature, let it not be impossible for grace to cry daily, "Welcome cross, welcome trials, welcome all things sweet or bitter, which shall bring forth within us that perfect man, that Divine ideal, visible ever to the eye of God, and growing more and

more upon our sight as we grow up into Him who is our Head." *A. J. Gordon.*

Tribulation comes, it will be as ye choose it, either an exercise or a condemnation. Such as it shall find you to be, will it be. Tribulation is a fire: does it find thee gold? it takes away the filth: does it find thee chaff? it turns it to ashes. Wherefore art thou disturbed? Thine heart is disturbed by the pressing troubles of the world, as that ship was in which Christ was asleep. Did not thy Lord tell thee the world should fail? So when the tempest beats furiously against thine heart, beware of shipwreck awake up in Christ. Present faith is Christ present; waking faith is Christ awake; slumbering faith is Christ asleep. *Augustine.*

A man who once went out from the face of his Lord and wept says, "Think it *not* strange concerning the fiery trial." It *is* "fiery," there is no denying that. I know and you know how it burns, scorches, turns beauty to ashes; but the strangeness is not the strangeness of accident, or caprice, or mockery, or carelessness. It has not "happened" to you at all. Love that is infinite never mocks, never tantalizes, never forgets. Did you ever do that with your mother or your child? and your love is not infinite. "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father," yes, even when the good things come wearing the aspect and the name of losses, or bereavements, or disappointments! Providence never blunders. He who keeps the stars punctual and the wheels of the universe running in order, who without slumbering watches the sleep of all His fourteen hundred million children every night, makes no mistakes: He is never taken unawares by a disease or a cloud. The mystery *is* a mystery, but it has a revelation within it, and it brings heavenly gifts under its wings. *F. D. H.*

There is a wondrous power of explanation in "afterward." This is the key which the Scriptures give us for the solution of the strange mystery of affliction. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." There are many things in God's way with His people which, at the time, are dark and obscure, but which the future makes clear and plain. *S. S. T.*

God tries, in order that we may stand, and that our feet may be strengthened by the trial. "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is

to be run for—not without dust and heat.”  
A. M.

No words can express how much the world owes to sorrow. Most of the epistles were written from a prison. Most of the psalms were born in a wilderness. The greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers have all passed through fire. The greatest poets have “learned in suffering what they taught in song.” In bonds Bunyan lived the allegory that he afterward indited, and we may thank Bedford jail for the “Pilgrim’s Progress.” All the foremost worthies of our world, all the spiritual heroes of our race, have been men of sorrow and acquainted with grief. Take comfort, afflicted Christian! you have often prayed to be made of some service in the world before you die, and now the answer to that prayer has come. God tries you because in some way He is about to use you; for your history will furnish no exception to the rule that when God is about to make pre-eminent use of a man, He puts him in the fire. *Charles Stanford.*

The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies. Even if one man had made a book of predictions of Jesus Christ, as to the time and the manner of His coming, and if Jesus Christ had come in conformity with these prophecies, this would be of an infinite weight. But there is here a great deal more. There is a succession of men who, during four thousand years, constantly and without variation, come, one after the other, predicting the same event. There is a whole people which announces Him and which subsists during four thousand years in order still to render their testimony of the assurances which they have of Him, from which they cannot be turned aside by any menaces or any persecutions which befall them. This is in a very different degree important. *Pascal.*

The very heart and essence of the old dispensation, as its features are exhibited in the writings of historians, law-givers and prophets, was the great and unquenchable Messianic hope. In the Old Testament Christ is prefigured; in the New He is revealed. In His teaching we see in all their fulness those constant elements which all religion strives more and more clearly to express—the holiness and love of God, the dignity and brotherhood of man. And so He stands at the centre of all history as the fulfilment of all the yearnings of the past, the justification of all the hopes of the future. Apart from Him all the deepest elements of the Old Testament become unintelligible. *Farrar.*

*The Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.* We call Him man, and man He is in everything but sin. The nature of man He took upon Himself. True man He showed Himself to be in all that pertained to His life on earth. As man He was born; He had an infancy, a childhood, a youth, a manhood. As man He grew in stature, He increased in wisdom, He dwelt with dutiful obedience in the humble home of His parents. As man He hungered and thirsted, toiled and rested, frequented the streets of cities, and traversed the high-ways of Galilee and Judea. As man He lived among, conversed with men. As man He took interest in everything human—He sympathized with human joys and sorrows. As man He evinced a human character, combining, as none other ever did, all virtues, all excellences in perfect proportion and absolute completeness. Perfect Man He was, He is, He shall be evermore! So we call Him God, and God He is if we have any proof that a God exists. God He is shown to be by *Heaven’s attesting voice* again and again; by the radiance of its transfiguring glory; by its power evinced in the darkened sun and rending rocks; by its messenger angels, visible at His advent and His tomb; and by its intervention in bearing Him upward on the clouds when He was parted from His disciples. God He is shown to be by the harmoniously inspired assertions of prophets, psalmists and apostles; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, uttered through these. *He* it was, the Lord God, who walked with Adam in the garden, that appeared to the devout patriarchs, that spake with Abraham as a Friend, that wrestled with Jacob, that communed with Moses, that uttered the Law in audible voice from Sinai, that companied with wandering Israel in the cloudy, fiery pillar, and shone in the shechinah of the holiest, and that revealed Himself to Elijah and the prophets as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the Ruler of nations, and as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, who will yet by no means clear the guilty.

And the God, so divinely attested, He *proved Himself* to be by knowledge and power, by word and deed. None of the thoughts of men but He unerringly discerned, nothing in their hearts but He fathomed to the depth. No measure of wisdom or acuteness in their reasonings but He, without previous study or thought, instantly apprehended, corrected, or overthrew. His own sublime, majestic declarations, “I am the truth, the light of the world,” were proven in the substance and the manner of His teaching. Truth never disclosed before, truth for

whose disclosure the mind and heart of man had been long yearning, revelations of the heart, the purposes and doings of God, revelations of the human soul, its intrinsic grandeur and worth, its guilt, degradation, ruin, and its possible redemption from all; its immortality of anguish or blessedness, these transcendent truths, with many subordinate ones as needful, He disclosed plainly, fully in the tone of absolute authority, as one who spake from *His own* resources of positive knowledge.

So He proved Himself *God* by His *deeds* of infinite power. The recorded assertions of His apostles—that the Word was God; that the world was made by Him; that by Him and for Him all things that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were created and do subsist, were substantiated by His own acts to men, in the instantaneous restoration of sealed senses and withered members, in the healing of incurable maladies, and in raising the dead to life. His creative power was evinced in turning water into wine and in multiplying the loaves and fishes. His absolute Lordship of nature was shown by the withering of the fig tree, by walking upon the sea, and by the stilling of the tempest at His word. His Divine power was further illustrated in His victory over Satan in Himself and His disciple. And He proved Himself God in the absolution He pronounced for sins and the peace which He wrought in penitent, believing souls. Such, so many, so convincing proofs incontrovertibly established upon the highest conditions of testimony have we that Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, is Divine. Such, so many, so conclusive that we have *none equal* to these to prove there *is* a God.

Man and God He is—perfect Man and perfect God. God from eternity, the same yesterday, to-day and forever; man from the hour of His incarnation, onward, forever! So man and God, He comes to us with absolute fulness for all our wants. He stands before us in His humanity and divinity. As a man and brother, now, as when on earth, entering into our feeling, our experiences, side by side He stands, His eyes looking into ours, His heart bending in sympathy to our fears and griefs, and swelling with our hopes and joys, His voice speaking and His hand extended to us in comfort and help.

And as God, a Being utterly transcending our finite conception of knowledge, purity and power; a Being of infinite holiness, of limitless might and love, whose sovereignty is universal, absolute and eternal, He encompasses our path and overarches our life, constraining us to

awe and reverence, to submission and obedience, and yet to trust and love. *Such* a Being, so adapted to *all* the needs of our imperfect, finite, and yet immortal nature; such a Being, so near and yet so far above us, so like and yet unlike, whose resources immeasurably exceed all our deepest desires and loftiest aspirations, we have in the *person* of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. And this person, so divinely and humanly constituted, so adapted to win our trusting affection and our adoring homage, presents Himself as taking this manhood upon His divinity expressly and solely for us, for our advantage, to reveal to us by His realized ideal of a perfect manhood the beauty and the greatness of unfallen human nature. And *more, far more*, by His infinite sacrifice to lift from us the burden of guilt, to meet for us the claim of God's violated law, to raise us from the death of sin to the life of holiness, to restore the forfeited image of God in our souls, to reconcile us to God and bring us, self-alienated and out-cast, back to the heart and home of God, to *renew* in us, and that forever, the life of God. B.

How deeply the doctrine of the incarnation, of the Divine-human complex person Jesus Christ, is involved in the whole Christian system is evident from the fact that the denial of this doctrine leads to the denial, one after one, of all the distinguishing doctrines of the Christian faith. A system without this doctrine ceases to urge the doctrines of grace. It loses its hold on the strongest feelings of the conscience and of the heart. It refuses to grapple with the great questions of theology. It praises the moral virtues; it wonders at all zeal. It has lost the feeling of the constant presence of that Captain of our salvation who has inspired the faith, quickened the ardor, aroused the intellect, and led forth the hosts of Christendom. "Its relation to Christ," as has been well said, "is a past, a dead relation;" and so they eulogize Him as they do a hero, and venerate Him as they do a saint; but such eulogy and such veneration are faint and heartless when compared with the living energy of the faith of Paul or with the devoted love and absorbing contemplation of the beloved disciple who ever spoke and lived as in the presence of a living Lord. As a matter of fact, it is true that the greatest earnestness, the loftiest faith, the deepest religious experience, the most heavenly spirituality, the most awful sense of God's majesty, and the most affectionate reliance upon His love have been found in connection with the

belief in an incarnate God. And surely if anything can arouse all our powers, awaken our intensest love, make us self-sacrificing, fill us with the holiest zeal and the purest enthusiasm, and satisfy perfectly all our wants, it is living faith in such a Lord, who is not only a Lord, but a brother also; in whom all that we can venerate as Divine and all that we can love as human are combined in perfect harmony.

*H. B. Smith.*

## ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER XIV.

**14:1** BEHOLD, a day of the LORD cometh, when thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be a very great valley*; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee by the valley of my mountains: for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azel: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be with brightness and with gloom: but it shall be one day which is known unto the LORD; not day, and not night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light. And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall the LORD be one, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as the Arabah, from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and she shall be lifted up, and shall dwell in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell therein, and there shall be no more curse: but Jerusalem shall dwell safely. And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the peoples that have warred against Jerusalem: their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. And Judah also shall fight against Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in those camps, as this plague. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso of all the families of the earth goeth not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, *neither shall it be* upon them; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, **HOLY UNTO THE LORD**; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holy unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

**Chap. 14.** The principles of interpretation which should rule in this chapter have been fully discussed and brought out in my remarks introductory to chap. 13. The events which it portrays are all yet in the future. Consequently there is no occasion to try to locate them in history, or to define their *precise* historic character. Their general significance and results may be inferred with reasonable certainty. The entire costume is Jewish, as we ought to expect. Jerusalem is invested by the combined forces of all nations; the city taken and sacked; half its people go into captivity (verses 1, 2). The Lord comes forth to fight against those nations (verse 3); He stands on the Mount of Olives and cleaves it in twain for His people to pass through (verse 4); they flee, but ultimately the Lord and His holy ones appear for their salvation (verse 5); a most peculiar twilight period follows, breaking forth near evening into the effulgence of full day (verses 6, 7); living waters flow from Jerusalem perpetually (verse 8); Jehovah alone is King over all the earth (verse 9); the whole world becomes a plain, and the temple-mountain stands alone the only mountain (verse 10); the plague that comes on those who fought against Jerusalem (verse 12)—panic and mutual slaughter consume them (verse 13); Judah aids Jerusalem in this great conflict against their common foes (verse 14); God's judgments reach all the domestic animals used by their enemies, as well as their owners (verse 15); all the surviving people of the world shall go up to Jerusalem to worship (verse 16); the plague on those who will not go up (verse 17), and especially on Egypt (verses 18, 19); holiness to the Lord in all inanimate things, universal and final (verses 20, 21). H. C.

The day of Jehovah comes, all nations are gathered against Jerusalem, already it is captured, and is suffering the last horrors of war, when Jehovah goes forth to battle for His people. All nature trembles as He marches along, Mount Olivet is cleft asunder, the people flee, the light of nature is shrouded, but living waters go forth from Jerusalem, and Jehovah's kingdom is established over all the earth. Henceforward Jerusalem is safely inhabited, and from year to year all nations go up thither to worship, for she is now the holy city, and upon all that she has is inscribed "Holiness unto the Lord." R. P. S.

1. "Behold," calls special attention to what follows, as of the deepest interest and greatest importance. Remarkably, the usual form, "day of the Lord," is materially changed here. It is,

"a day comes for the Lord," one day pre eminently *for Him*, in which He will fully vindicate His name as the God of Zion, His power as one mighty to save, and His faithfulness as one who, having long ago promised, comes forth now in the fulness of time to perform. The other form—simply day of the Lord—occurs in Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:14, and elsewhere; but this is unique and peculiar, occurring, however, substantially in Jer. 51:6: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon; be not cut off in her iniquity; for it is a time of vengeance *for* the Lord." Also in Isa. 2:12: "Thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee," is of course said of Jerusalem, and implies that she is in the power of her enemies.

2. This verse gives somewhat the details of the case, to show how it comes to pass that the spoil of the city is divided among its captors within her very walls. The Lord, by His providential agencies, brings all the nations up against Jerusalem to battle. In this one prominent feature, this prophecy harmonizes with Ezek. 38, 39, and with Rev. 20:8, 9. The city is taken; the horrible scenes usually consequent on such a capture ensue. Finally, half the people go into captivity; the other half remain in the city. We do not hear from these captives again. They meet the doom of the wicked, and doubtless represent the corrupt and not truly pious portion of the people. This cleansing of the nominal Church by which one half is sloughed off, taken in connection with the similar operation predicted (chap. 13:8, 9), which cut off two parts out of three, gives us a strong view of the fearful corruption of the Church, and of the amount of winnowing and separation requisite before her great victories over the wide world can be achieved. Like the host of Gideon, her host is to be reduced to the faithful few.

3. "Then shall the Lord *go forth*"—this Hebrew verb being the common one for "going out" to war and battle—*e.g.*, Hab. 3:13; Isa. 26:21, which latter passage, like the one before us, assumes that the Lord has been at rest, waiting for the fit hour, and now comes forth for special displays of His power against His foes.

4. The commander of a vast army takes some elevated position which overlooks the battle-field. So Jehovah takes His stand on the Mount of Olives, which overlooked the city on the east, affording the best commanding view of the city. To give the greater vividness to the scene as a reality, it is said "His feet shall stand there." The mountain cleaves

asunder in the middle, half removing northward and half southward, leaving a wide valley. There can be no doubt of a tacit historical allusion here to the very similar cleaving of the Red Sea for His people to escape from Pharaoh's pursuing host. That was done literally; this, being a historical allusion, means only that a deliverance is now effected *like that*, equally glorious to the power that saved His people, equally effective for their salvation. The analogy will be yet more complete if we may suppose, with Hengstenberg, that the mountain is cleft by an earthquake, which, while it opened the mountain for their easy escape, swallowed up their enemies. As the text does not affirm this, however, it must stand as mere conjecture. This earthquake alarmed the retreating host and hastened their flight—of which fear and flight the next verse speaks.

5. This earthquake in the days of Uzziah is not noticed in the historical books, but is probably alluded to by Amos (1: 1). That, like this, was a time of panic and of earnest flight from the city to the mountains for safety. "Now there comes the Lord my God, and all the saints with thee." With this the scene changes; Immanuel appears in pre-eminent splendor, and all the holy in His train. The nearest parallel to this scene as respects His retinue is De. 33: 2, where Moses said: "The Lord came from Sinai; He shined forth from Mount Paran; and He came with ten thousands of saints," etc. The prophet speaks of this scene as it appeared to him in prophetic vision. The scene was peculiarly and pre-eminently impressive. He had a vivid sense of Immanuel, "the captain of the Lord's host," *as his own God*, and the God of his own people, and therefore says, "There comes the Lord my God!"

The next striking feature he puts in the form of an address to Immanuel: "All the holy ones are with thee." The great aim of this revelation is to impress the prophet, and through his words all the people of God in every age, with this great truth, that Jesus Immanuel is the Almighty Saviour of His people, and that He employs angelic spiritual beings as His agents in the ministrations of His mediatorial reign, both in the care of His people and in His judgments on the wicked. Hence these agents sometimes appear in the visions of prophecy. Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and above him were the seraphim." The same thing was symbolized when (2 K. 6: 17) Elisha prayed in behalf of his young servant: "Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes, that he may

see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." This was only bringing before the prophet's mental eye the actual verities of things—those agencies, full of power, though usually invisible to mortals, by which Jesus Christ administers the providential government of this world. H. C.

6, 7. In a wide application, the words may be regarded as describing the mixed character of God's dispensations to the race. Looking at the course of His providence and grace through the long day of time, at the whole train of events which have marked man's existence on the earth, it is obvious that since holiness and sin began their strife in the primeval paradise, light and darkness, mercy and judgment, happiness and suffering, have been blended in all that God has done and man experienced. "But it shall come to pass that at evening time there shall be light." The long, long day of varied light and darkness, the long world strife of good and evil, of truth and error, of happiness and misery, shall end in unclouded brightness, in the triumph, complete and lasting, of holiness, of truth, of blessedness. For at the evening of the world the Lord shall come! "He shall be King over all the earth," there shall be "one Lord, and His name one." The isles shall receive His law, the nations shall become His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. B.

"At evening time it shall be light." The revolution of years is silently bringing nearer and nearer the evening time of the moral world. God's administration of this world's affairs is approaching a glorious completion. The mystery and darkness that now invest His throne will be dissipated, and His ways shall be justified before the assembled universe. The hands of the clock of Time are moving on, slowly and silently, toward an hour which shall be universally known and felt, soon as it is reached, as the end of Time. Oh, that last evening time of the world, what pen can adequately picture it? The cloudy day of Providence will end, and in the light of the great white throne of judgment the grandest vindication of His government will be made by Jehovah Himself! The reasons and equity of His acts will no longer appear uncertain. A thousand queries, suggested by as many strange things of our present state, will be answered. The prayer of the old reformer, that we offer, now and then, as we are brought under darkness, "more light, Lord; more light, more light!" will be



granted in a manner that will awe us down into the profoundest attitude of thankfulness.

Then will there be made an adjustment of contrary things. Inequalities of rank and condition will be rectified. Good and evil will be forever separated. Truth and error will dissolve companionship. The right shall be established and the wrong put down. Justice will be administered by One who cannot err. Merit will be recognized and receive its due reward, and mere pretence will be put to shame. Oh, what a clearing away of mists will there be ! What startling revelations will be made ! And as the *finale* of that wonderful scene of the last judgment the voices of ten times ten thousand angels and archangels, joining with the hosts of the saved from earth, shall be heard exclaiming, " Blessing, and honor, and power, and glory be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne ! Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints ! " *Luckenbach.*

In a *personal* application, these figurative expressions will describe the *present mixed condition of the righteous*. By day and night, light and darkness, are meant knowledge and ignorance, sin and holiness, prosperity and adversity, hope and fear. And when it is said that it shall be neither day nor night with the people of God, we are to understand that their condition in the world is neither perfectly good nor perfectly evil, that there is mixture and change in their portion. Out of compassion to our infirmities, the Lord diversifies our state. That we may not forget Him in the light, He sends us darkness ; and then, that our feet may not stumble, that our hearts may not fail us in the darkness, He causes the light again to rise on us, and we are comforted. This procedure *brings our graces into exercise* ; it manifests and strengthens them. Some of these are called forth by prosperity only, at least they shine then with peculiar brightness ; such are moderation, deadness to the world, self-denial, humility. Others again are seen only or chiefly in the night of affliction—submission, contentment, patience, all the suffering graces of the Spirit. This diversified experience is designed also to *bring the people of God to a more simple dependence on Himself*. It accomplishes this end by showing them their own weakness and the Divine strength. C. B.

God in the end can turn even our failures and mistakes to His glory and our own blessing ; His wisdom can overrule our error, and His mercy will forgive our weakness. If, through our own fault, not His, our pastures

have not been as green, our waters not as still as they might have been, yet surely as we look back and count up our past blessings, they will make our heart full and our eyes dim. Dark as the day may have been, " at eventide it shall be light." Sometimes our path in life seems like a lane full of windings, where the steep banks shut out the light and air, and all we can do is to trudge steadily on through the thick mire. But if we look high up in front of us we shall see, as Israel saw, the faint blue hills of the Land of Promise rising up against the sky. The path will come out at length in full view of the celestial city ; and at last, at last we shall be at home. *Ep. Thorold.*

Oftentimes we look with forebodings to the time of old age, forgetful that at eventide it shall be light. To many saints old age is the choicest season of their lives. A balmy air fans the mariner's cheek as he hears the shore of immortality ; fewer waves ruffle his sea ; quiet reigns, deep, still and solemn. From the altar of age the flashes of the fire of youth are gone, but the flame of more earnest feeling remains. The setting sun seems larger than when aloft in the sky, and a splendor of glory tinges all the clouds which surround all his going down. Pain breaks not the sweet calm of the twilight of age ; for strength made perfect in weakness bears up in patience under it all.

The Lord's people shall enjoy light in the hour of death. Unbelief laments, the shadows fall, the night is coming, existence is ending. Ah, no ! crieth Faith ; the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Light is come—the light of immortality, the light of a father's countenance. Farewell, beloved one ; thou art gone ; thou wavest thy hand. Ah, now it is light. The pearly gates are open ; the golden streets shine in the jasper light. We cover our eyes, but thou beholdest the unseen. Thou hast light at eventide, such as we have not. *Surgeon.*

Into that unclouded day, into that perfect knowledge and vision of God, into that completely satisfied experience of His fellowship and joy, *all our dead in Christ have entered*. Their darkness is ended ; their burdens laid down ; their labor is terminated in rest, their trouble in peace, their sorrow in joy, their exile in home—an everlasting, blessed home with God. To that home of rest and peace and joy *our* exiled hearts aspire, and still we journey on. To us the way is still, as it hath been thus far, through weariness and trial. But He who led and holds us on the way bids us remember

the infirmities, the burdens, the griefs which He has appointed as the means, needful, wise and kind, of attaining that blessed end. Since He appointeth our light afflictions which, in the comparison of an endless being, are but for a moment, to work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, let us not faint or be discouraged because of them. Since these afflictions are God's instruments in our needed discipline of refinement and purification, since in our every experience of trial He is chastening us for our profit, that we may be made partakers of His holiness, be it ours to watch and labor and pray, that they bring forth in us the fruit of patience, of trust, of more perfect consecration, of more active endeavor of love to do His holy, blessed will! B.

8. Water is a natural symbol of God's spiritual blessings, especially those in which the agencies of the Holy Spirit are prominent. Indeed, water is the special symbol of this Divine Spirit, as may be seen in the explanatory clauses of Ezek. 36:25, 27; Isa. 44:3. The latter reads, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty"—shown to mean, "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring." Ezekiel has it, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," etc., shown to mean, "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes," etc. Moreover, the very terms which express the manner of giving the Spirit indicate this: "I will *pour* My Spirit upon you," etc. Strikingly parallel to this passage of Zechariah is Ezek. 47:1-12. There the water flows from under the sanctuary, here from Jerusalem; there is one widening, deepening stream, till it becomes a mighty river, and sweeping through the desert eastward, pours itself into the Dead Sea and heals its waters; here one half flows into the front sea, which is, of course, the Dead Sea, and the other half into the Mediterranean on the west. That of Ezekiel carries on its bosom health, abundance, undying verdure, and is of course to be considered perennial; this flows during the arid summer as well as the rainy winter, which amounts to saying that it flows all the year, and year after year, never failing. Now, as Palestine would be rendered almost an earthly Paradise by such living streams as Zechariah and Ezekiel have described, *if they were to be miraculously created by the finger of God*, and become literal verities, so we must take these figures as predictions of blessings of the richest, most abundant, and most enduring kind possible for God to bestow on human souls.

That Zechariah's stream of water flows from Jerusalem and Ezekiel's "from under the sanctuary" indicate plainly that the Spirit of God will yet continue, as ever, to make the institutions of the Gospel—the service and worship of the sanctuary—the vehicles and the channels through which He will pour abroad the fulness of His blessings upon men.

9. *And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one.* The precious fact predicted here is that the Lord Jehovah reigns supreme over all the earth, and is recognized everywhere as the only true God. The sense is not precisely this—that now and henceforth there shall really be but one God, as if to imply that in former times there had been more true gods than one; but this—that now He is known, acknowledged, honored, obeyed, as the one only God. The very names of other gods are forgotten. No other name than His is recognized as a name for God. Now, therefore, "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever." Now, at length, the long-offered prayer, the burden of pious hearts age after age, is fulfilled: "*Thy kingdom come*; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That good promise by the mouth and pen of David (Ps. 22:27, 28) has now come to pass: "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is Governor among the nations."

10. "All the land" should read, as it clearly means, *all the earth*, being precisely the same words rendered "all the earth" in the previous verse: "The Lord shall be King over all the earth." "Turned" means *changed*, in its physical conformation, from a mountainous to a plain, level country. The sense is that all the earth shall become a plain similar to that from Geba to Rimmon. Geba was on the northern border of Judah (2 K. 23:8), and Rimmon on the southern (1 Chron. 4:32). "*It shall be lifted up*" means that Jerusalem shall rise in lofty, towering grandeur, the only mountain in all the world, and, of course, the chief wonder and admiration of the world, all else being a plain. It shall be crowned on its summit with the glorious temple of the living God. This carries forward the figure used (Micah 4:1; Isa. 2:2) at least one important step further. Micah and Isaiah speak of the temple-mountain as "established" (firmly set) "on the top of the mountains and exalted above the

hills." Zechariah sees all other mountains and hills sinking down to a plain, and the temple-mountain, or rather Jerusalem herself as a whole, is lifted up and becomes the only mountain of the world. So magnificent, honorable, and glorious is to be the future kingdom of Messiah!

**12.** The prophet left the enemies of Zion at the third verse to follow the fortunes of Zion herself, and to show us, through verses 4-11, how signally the Lord appeared for her help, and how gloriously He turned her darkness into day, and then poured out for her living waters and rebuilt her capital in greater and more enduring splendor than ever. Now he returns to inform us of the doom of those old enemies who marshalled their hosts against Zion, as appears in verses 1-3. They are smitten with a living death. Their flesh, touched with some consuming leprosy, perishes while yet they stand upon their feet. Their eyes consume away in their sockets; their tongue in their mouths. The eye and the tongue are specified as being the most valued organs—those of sight and of speech; and probably, too, as having been specially used in their war upon Zion. With their tongue they had spoken proudly, blasphemously, profanely. The type of their spirit had been, "Let her be defiled; let our eye look upon Zion" (Micah 4: 11). "Where is the Lord thy God? Mine eye shall behold her" (Micah 7: 10). The Lord is wont to make His retributive judgments indicate the sin for which they are sent. This plague wherewith the Lord shall smite the open enemies and actual assailants of His Zion is intended to be terrible.

**13.** The word "tumult" rather means a *panic*—the blended terror and confusion which an awful sense of the fact that Almighty God is against them would naturally produce. This verse and the preceding should be located in the events of this chapter, immediately after the first three verses. We are not to suppose that this plague of verse 12, and this panic with mutual slaughter of verse 13, come in only long after the scenes of the first three verses, and *after* Jerusalem has become peaceful and glorious. They rather go back to give us in detail the manner in which the Lord disposed of those enemies that fought against Jerusalem, took and divided her spoil, and made captives of half her people. All suddenly the plagues of Jehovah smite them; their flesh consumes away; this awful form of death serves to panic smite their hosts, and they fall upon each other in the dread work of mutual slaughter!

"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Judges 5: 31).

**14.** Judah fights *in* Jerusalem, not *against* her. The meaning is that, with a mutually good understanding, the people of the country rush to the help of the city, and fight heroically within the city for her defence. The spoil from the enemy is immense. The ultimate truth taught here is that *real union* shall be the strength and glory of the millennial Church.

**15.** The same plague that came from the Lord upon incorrigibly wicked men falls also on all their cattle, horses, mules, camels and asses. They are supposed to be polluted by the horrible corruption of their owners. Moreover, the Lord would make His judgments so terrible as to inspire awe of His majesty and justice. The cattle of a city given to idolatry were to be destroyed. So were the animals in some of those most wicked cities doomed of God to destruction. H. C.

**16-21.** In these words the future reception of the true religion by all nations is foretold under the symbols of the Mosiac economy, with its ritual, its yearly feasts, and its central place of worship. For this principle of interpretation we have the authority of the New Testament (Rom. 12: 1; 1 Pet. 2: 5). *Barrois*.

**16.** The slaughter of the wicked nations, implied in verse 3, and terribly indicated in verses 12, 13, leaves some yet living; how many relatively to the whole number, or to the number slain, we are not told. But we are told that those who remain shall be converted to God. They now come up to Jerusalem, no longer to fight against her, but to worship the living God in her temple, and to join heart and hand with the Lord's people. They are changed men—changed from sinners to saints. The Jewish idea of a convert made to the true God in distant Gentile lands must naturally imply that he will come up year by year to Jerusalem to worship God at their great festivals. This idea they could not fail to carry over to the reign of their expected Messiah. Prophecy makes Him a second David, the great successor on David's throne, to reign over all the nations from that great central metropolis of His kingdom. It remains for us to translate this Old Testament phraseology into that of the New Testament, and to modify those ideas which were the natural, not to say necessary, outgrowth of the ancient dispensation, and make them correspond to the new type of things established by our Lord and His apostles. So modified, we no longer think of converts in the ends of the

earth making their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to keep her holy feasts and to worship Jehovah there. We understand that every living Christian heart is God's temple, and that every sincere worshipper is accepted in the New Mediator of the better covenant. Now after Zion has been redeemed from her sins, made victorious over her foes, has received all that survive of them to her bosom as friends, and they are made welcome to her munificent blessings from her King, why should they not bring up their annual offerings of thanksgiving and praise? Isaiah (66: 23) names the "new moons and the Sabbaths" as the periods at which all flesh should come up to worship before the Lord—showing, when compared with this statement by Zechariah, that a literal coming is not thought of by the Spirit of inspiration. The essential idea is expressed as well by one form of statement as by the other. This idea is, that all the people of the earth will worship the true God in the modes of His own appointment, as Christ taught the woman of Samaria (John 4: 20-24), and as the converted Jews were taught (Heb., chaps. 7-10).

**17.** This curse is entirely in accordance with the principles of the ancient theocracy which promised rain to the people if obedient, but threatened to withhold it if they turned aside to idols. (See De. 11: 13-17.) The ancient economy provided for retribution in the present world sufficiently full and sure to make the sense of it effective in those early ages, and to minister to an intelligent faith in God's actual government of the world. The previous verse speaks of "nations;" this, particularly, of "families," because it was by families that the Hebrew people came up to Jerusalem on their great annual festivals.

**18, 19.** The general sense is plain—viz., that Egypt shall be no exception to the general law. If they go not up, the same plagues shall fall on them for this neglect as on other nations. The fact is, that the failure of rain around the head waters of the Nile is as fatal to Egypt as the failure of rain in other countries. Let it be noted that these threatened plagues (verses 17, 18) do not of necessity imply that any families will refuse to go up to worship the Lord of Hosts. They may only show that men are still moral agents, acted upon by fear and hope, and made responsible for their free moral acts.

**20, 21.** That holiness to the Lord shall be not only very pure, but widely extended, is taught here by three distinct statements: 1. Things that have no special sanctity—*e.g.*, bells on horses, shall be consecrated as altogether

holy. 2. The less sacred things about the temple shall become as holy as those most sacred were wont to be—*e.g.*, common pots for cooking food shall become no less sacred than the bowls which received the blood of animals slain in sacrifice; the latter being of old accounted most holy, the former least so. 3. The Canaanites shall be no more in the Lord's temple. Canaanite was the common Hebrew word for trafficker, merchant—a business in bad repute among the Hebrews because so much associated with fraud and deceit. (See Hos. 12: 7, 8.) There is special force in the allusion to the bells upon the horses because the Hebrew law and Hebrew sentiment had a prejudice against horses, as associated with pride and vain show; with reliance also on some other power than God, and with *war*. This prejudice was all the stronger because their most powerful enemies came upon them with a strong force of cavalry and chariots; while, on the other hand, their own kings were forbidden to multiply horses. (See De. 17: 16.) The pious Psalmist said, "Some trust in chariots and some in horsemen; we, in the name of the Lord our God." The pious in Hos. 14: 3 say, "We will not ride upon horses." But now, in the purity of the millennial age, even the bells, mere ornaments on the horses, shall bear the same inscription as the ancient breast-plate worn by the high priest—"Holiness to the Lord." How exceedingly expressive of the absolute and universal consecration of all things to the service and worship of the one all-glorious God!

Reviewing briefly the course of thought in this entire chapter, I call renewed attention to the following points: 1. The whole chapter must be taken as figurative, and not literal. The literal sense, implying the actual cleaving of the Mount of Olives, and the escape of half the population of the city through its cleft bowels; two literal rivers flowing from Jerusalem, one east and the other west; all the mountains in the world levelled down to plains, save the one on which Jerusalem and its temple shall stand; all the nations coming up to Jerusalem yearly to the Feast of Tabernacles; Judaism with its bloody sacrifices enjoined on all the Gentile world, despite of the whole New Testament to the contrary; such things, supposed to take place literally, are simply incredible and absurd. Some of them, if they were to take place literally, would inevitably defeat their own ends. All would defeat and crush out New Testament Christianity. There can be no sufficient reasons for giving this chapter

a literal construction. 2. I have studiously abstained from the attempt to determine and define the fulfilment of any minute feature in this grouping of Hebrew figures, because I have no faith in such attempts. *When* these things shall be fulfilled; in what precise form the wicked shall assail the Church of God; how many of them shall be cut off by the plagues of the Lord, and how many shall remain to be converted—these points, and such as these, I think it wise to make no attempt to determine. Ungodliness has its group of specific forms to-day; who can tell whether they will change essentially before this general onslaught upon Zion? The world has long since passed the besieging of the literal Jerusalem, *as being herself the Lord's Zion*; probably has passed the era of religious wars, avowedly to destroy Christianity. But stern conflicts with Satan and his human aids await the kingdom of Christ ere its great and final victory. 3. In the exposition of this chapter the first main inquiry should be, How would the Jews of Zechariah's time understand it? What would be the general impression made upon them by this grouping of Jewish images and ideas? Would not they hail this chapter as God's word of promise, that the worship of their own Jehovah would one day become universal; that their old enemies would first be greatly reduced in numbers by fearful plagues, and the remnant be converted to the living God, and that then the worship of God would become pure and substantially universal? They could make of it nothing less than this. No other language could express these points more surely or more forcibly than this. 4. Then this is the general sense of the chapter. For it was written to be read and to be understood by the Jews of his time. The writer of it was himself a Jew, writing for first readers who were Jews, and therefore he used and could use only Jewish terms and figures. The general sense of these figures we get from that ancient economy. It only remains (as already said) that we translate Jewish into Christian terms, Jewish symbols into Christian thought and meaning, and we have the truth which the Lord hath taught us with so much clearness, beauty and force in this chapter. Let the name of the Lord be praised for such and so much light upon the otherwise unknown future of His earthly Zion! We will bless His name, not only that He has formed such purposes of loving-kindness—not only that He has determined to bring all the nations of men to live joyfully beneath Messiah's sceptre, but that *He has revealed to us this purpose,*

and delineated in such forms of beauty and joy the glorious future which awaits Messiah's kingdom among men. II. C.

20, 21. It is in allusion to the golden fillet around the high priest's mitre, inscribed on the forehead "Holiness to the Lord," that the prophet Zechariah, predicting the glory of the future Church, declares, "In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses 'Holiness to the Lord;' yea, every pot that is in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts," meaning that a time shall come that the consecration of all the people of God and their daily avocations shall be as complete as that of the high-priest, whose forehead wears this inscription; they shall all be priests as holy as the high-priest himself. S. R.—Holiness to the Lord had been written only upon the high-priest's forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be living temples and spiritual priests dedicated to the honor of God, and employed in His service. Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been, because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments, and brighter patterns of holiness; and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification after Christ's ascension than ever before. There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things shall be devoted to God that seemed very foreign. When there shall be such an abundance of real holiness, people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness; they that sacrifice shall come and take of these common vessels and seeth their sacrifices therein, making no distinction between them and the bowls before the altar. II.

No scene or station of all the earth that can eye Paradise or catch the gleams of the atoning cross is truly ignoble or utterly forlorn. He who promised that, in the last days, the inscription which shone on the front of the high-priest's mitre, "Holiness unto the Lord," should be written also on the very bells of the horses, and that "every pot" in Jerusalem and its outlying streets should become holy as the consecrated furniture of His own temple and altar, can in like manner render the lowliest scenes of human art and toil and traffic the schools of truth and duty and peace, schools ministering alike to the truest happiness and to the most perfect holiness of our race. He can make each allowable task of our earthly life to become also "Holiness to the Lord;" and as the Christian's body is made a temple of the Holy Ghost, so can

he render the Christian himself, in all his social relations and enterprises, "*a priest and a king unto God.*" And the great principle of conciliation amid earth's jarring tribes and clashing interests, and of true and helpful communion among mankind, is not external, but internal, not material, but spiritual, not terrene, but celestial; and is found in the blending by this one Divine Spirit of all earth's inhabitants in a common entrance before a common redemption, tending as these inhabitants are, under a common sin and doom, to the same inevitable graves; but all of them invited, in the one name of one Christ, to aspire to the same heaven of endless and perfect blessedness. *W. R. Williams.*

Let "Holiness to the Lord" be written upon your hearts in all that you do. Do no work which you cannot entitle God to and truly say He set you about; and do nothing in the world for any other ultimate end than to please and glorify and enjoy Him. And remember that whatever you do must be done as a means to these, and as by one that is that way going on to heaven. All your labor must be the labor of a traveller, which is all for his journey's end; and all your respect of affection to place or thing in your way must be in respect to your attainment of the end; as a traveller loveth a good way, a good horse, a good inn, a dry cloak, or good company; but nothing must be loved here as your end or home. *Baxter.*

With great distinctness the Scriptures of truth affirm that religion demands the consecration of everything connected with our life. Rightly viewed, it sanctifies, sets apart to a holy use and end every relation, every occupation, with every necessary, natural and proper action connected with business, with friendly intercourse, with solitary or social recreation. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," is the Divine injunction for the governance of all human toil. Diligence and prayerful dependence in order to secure the prospering favor of God, and a single aim to make the prosperity He bestows tributary to His high and holy purposes, these are the principles here indicated as rightly directing and controlling the temporal pursuits of men. To the Christian, pursuing his calling upon these principles and with these ends, applying them faithfully day by day to the details of that calling, how blessed the effects upon his temporal condition, his spiritual character, his growth in grace and increase in usefulness! How would he be incited to patient persistence in labor, thus avoiding the temporal curse as well as the criminality of ignorance! How would his hardest toil be lightened by a cheerful consciousness of

duty done! How would his cares, anxieties, and even reverses be relieved of their weightiest pressure, under the assured conviction that an Infinite wisdom and love were his, to which to appeal, and an Almighty arm on which to lean! How much more hopefully might he labor, and more confidently anticipate a satisfactory result! How much more just an appreciation would he attain of the true value of wealth as a means to a higher, holier end, and how much more wisely would he use that wealth! How would his accumulations, his merchandise, his flocks or herds, his lands or money, even the very implements and appliances of his toil, recall his stewardship, perpetuate and deepen his sense of obligation, and stimulate him to personal effort for perishing souls! And thus his very business or toil would become a part of his religion, an act of worship and a means of grace to help him on in the Divine life. This would identify his interests with the interests of his Master; in a word, he would be prompted to engage more and more in every good work, to give more and more of his substance to the diffusion of the Gospel, and so contribute to the efficient, rapid progress of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world.

Of the life of such a Christian, one who thus consecrates his daily toil by the recognition and service of God, truthfully and beautifully it has been written, "Thus ordered, his whole life will be one prolonged act of consecration. The psalm of a grateful heart will, with unrelenting flow, fill up all the interval of his visits to the closet and the sanctuary. The life of godliness will be devotional even on common days, in familiar scenes and secular employments. Its calendar will have its whole year hallowed, while it keeps still its days of special sanctity, the thrice hallowed. It will be worship at work, kneading the leaven of Christian principle into the entire mass of its personal activity and social influence." *B.*

Zechariah's prophecies of Christ are, in some respects, the most remarkable in the Old Testament. In one of his visions the Father summons the sword to awake against the Shepherd, and against the Man that is His fellow; in another, men are looking in agony on the Lord whom they have pierced; in a third, Messiah rides as a conqueror on an ass into Jerusalem; and in a fourth, He is King of all the earth, and on the very bells of the horses there is inscribed "Holiness unto the Lord." The Divine as well as the human nature of Christ, and His office as an atoning Saviour, were thus very distinctly made known. *W. G. B.*

## PROPHECY OF MALACHI.

## MALACHI, INTRODUCTION ; CHAPTER I.

**I : 1** THE burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

- 2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us ? Was not  
 3 Esau Jacob's brother ? saith the LORD : yet I loved Jacob ; but Esau I hated, and made his  
 4 mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. Whereas  
 Edom saith, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places ; thus saith  
 the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down ; and men shall call them The  
 border of wickedness, and The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.  
 5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel.  
 6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a father, where is  
 mine honour ? and if I be a master, where is my fear ? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O  
 7 priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name ? Ye offer  
 polluted bread upon mine altar. And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee ? In that ye  
 8 say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And when ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is  
 no evil ! and when ye offer the lame and sick, it is no evil ! Present it now unto thy governor ;  
 9 will he be pleased with thee ? or will he accept thy person ? saith the LORD of hosts. And  
 now, I pray you, intreat the favour of God, that he may be gracious unto us : this hath been  
 10 by your means : will he accept any of your persons ? saith the LORD of hosts. Oh that there  
 were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in  
 vain ! I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at  
 11 your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name  
 is great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense is offered unto my name, and a pure  
 12 offering : for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye profane  
 it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is  
 13 contemptible. Ye say also, Behold, what a weariness is it ! and ye have snuffed at it, saith  
 the LORD of hosts ; and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame,  
 and the sick ; thus ye bring the offering : should I accept this of your hand ? saith the LORD.  
 14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto  
 the LORD a blemished thing : for I am a great king, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is  
 terrible among the Gentiles.

THE word "Malachi" means "my messenger" or "my angel." As occurring in the title to this prophecy, it may be understood to be the name of the prophet who wrote the prophecy ; or it may be a surname given him, taken from 3 : 1 ; or it may possibly be merely a designation for the book, taken from 3 : 1. The first view is a convenient one to take, and is at least as likely as either of the others. The book was written by a prophet of the time of the second administration of Nehemiah, a man of the same spirit with Ezra and Nehemiah. It was written either during the lifetime of Ezra or very soon after his death. W. J. B.

Malachi is the last of the prophets, and is therefore called "the Seal," his book closing the Old Testament canon. Like Habakkuk, he

is, in so far as his personal history is concerned, "a name, and nothing more." The Sacred Chronicles, even in the Book of Nehemiah, do not so much as mention him, although he was a zealous fellow laborer with that patriotic governor, and greatly aided him in his endeavors to secure a willing and grateful obedience to the Divine law. In this, however, he does but share the fate of those Psalmists who, on the return from the Captivity, composed many songs for the temple service. The simple fact is that we know nothing of the personal history of Malachi, and cannot even be sure whether "Malachi" is a proper name or an appellation. The Old Testament closes, as the New Testament opens, with the words of one who is "a voice" to us rather than a man.

But though we know nothing of the author, we can fix the date of this prophecy with reasonable accuracy. Indeed, it dates itself. All the notes of time it contains point steadily, and with one consent, to the second sojourn of Nehemiah in Jerusalem—i.e., about B.C. 420. It may even be said that the prophecy of Malachi, the last of the prophetic books, is simply a commentary on Nehemiah, the last of the historical books. From the whole tone of the prophecy it is obvious that the temple had been long rebuilt, its worship long restored—long enough for grave abuses to have crept in, and to have become habitual. Among these abuses were the violation of the Sabbath law, the offering of maimed and unclean sacrifices, the withholding of tithes, indifference deepening into weariness of the worship of the sanctuary, and intermarriage with heathen races on the part of the priests as well as the people. These are the sins which Malachi denounces, and these were the sins with which Nehemiah had painfully to contend. *Cor.*

The last of the long series of Hebrew prophets, Malachi stood in the same relation to Nehemiah during the latter portion of his work of restoration and reform at Jerusalem which Haggai and Zechariah had occupied in relation to Zerubbabel. Not that his name is directly mentioned as having been associated with Nehemiah in the events recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Nehemiah; but a comparison of his denunciation of the sins of the people with the record of Nehemiah's reforms is strong evidence of the fact that they were contemporaries. The passages upon a comparison of which this conclusion is founded are: Mal. 2:8 with Neh. 13:15, 29; Mal. 2:10-16 with Neh. 13:23-27; and Mal. 3:7-12 with Neh. 13:10, etc. B. C.

That he prophesied after the times of Haggai and Zechariah is inferred from his omitting to mention the restoration of the temple, and from no allusion being made to him by Ezra. The Captivity was already a thing of the long past, and is not referred to. The existence of the temple service is presupposed in Mal. 1:10; 3:1, 10. The Jewish nation had still a political chief (1:8), distinguished by the same title as that borne by Nehemiah (Neh. 12:26), to which Gesenius assigns a Persian origin. Hence Vitringa, Kennicott, Hales, Davidson, and most biblical critics conclude that Malachi delivered his prophecies after the second return of Nehemiah from Persia (Neh. 13:6), and subsequently to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes Longimanus—i.e., about B.C. 420. From

the striking parallelism between the state of things indicated in Malachi's prophecies and that actually existing on Nehemiah's return from the court of Artaxerxes, it is on all accounts highly probable (so Mr. Wright) that the efforts of the secular governor were on this occasion seconded by the preaching of "Jehovah's messenger," and that Malachi occupied the same position with regard to the reformation under Nehemiah which Isaiah held in the time of Hezekiah, and Jeremiah in that of Josiah. The last chapter of canonical Jewish history is the key to the last chapter of its prophecy. Malachi (so Ayre) was commissioned to reprove both priests and people, and to invite them to "reformation by promises of blessing and warnings of awful judgment." The Book of Malachi is contained in four chapters in our version, as in the LXX., Vulgate and Peshito-Syriac. In the Hebrew the third and fourth form but one chapter. *Dis. B.*

*Subject-matter.* The prophecy of Malachi forms one connected treatise, having for its main object the denunciation of practices inconsistent with the obedience and responsibilities of God's people; practices which had grown to a head during the absence of Nehemiah at the court of the Persian king. The prophet's purpose was to strengthen the hands of Nehemiah in the reforms which he was laboring to effect; yet not without reference to the person to whom all the prophets with greater or less clearness of language had borne witness, and to the time when the spiritual kingdom of the Son of David was to be established upon earth. The writer addresses himself directly to the sins which he found prevailing among the people, and shows their inconsistency with their profession of obedience to the will of God and with the formal acts of worship which were duly rendered. The gross idolatry of earlier times had disappeared; but the not less dangerous error of practices not in harmony with the professed and outward service rendered to God had sprung up. B. C.

Not far from four hundred years before Christ this last in the long series of inspired prophets united his efforts with those of Nehemiah to call back the apostate people to their forsaken God, to rebuke them for their great sins, and to animate the believing portion by some very distinct and precious promises of the conversion of the Gentiles; of the coming of the glorious Lord, "the Messenger of the covenant," to His earthly temple; and also of the coming of John Baptist, here designated as "My messenger who shall prepare the way be-



fore Me," and as "Elijah the prophet," H. C.

In the early part of his second administration, Nehemiah made strenuous efforts to place these matters again on a true footing, as we learn from Neh. 13. The contents of the Book of Malachi show that it was written just at this juncture and in furtherance of these efforts. It rebukes the priests (presumably including the singers, gate-keepers and other Levites), because they had not the courage and fidelity to stand by their duties even at the cost of hardships. It reminds them that such cowardice was especially reprehensible at a time when Jehovah's name was great among the nations. On the other hand, it rebukes the people for not bringing all the tithes into the storehouse, so that the support of the temple would be provided for. It rebukes Judah because, in the persons of its citizens and its priests, it had "married the daughter of a foreign god" (2: 11). It emphasizes the fact that this is the second offence of the kind (2: 13). And it rebukes false swearing, along with adultery and oppression (3: 5).

A second characteristic of the book is that, while it rebukes specific misconduct, it nevertheless gives principal attention to the bad spirit that lies back of the specific misconduct. It assumes that an evil habit of self-righteous scepticism is prevalent, and deals with this habit as well as with the wrong acts that spring from it. The habit exhibits itself in two ways. First, they answer back when Jehovah reproves them, instead of listening obediently (Mal. 1: 2, 6, 7; 2: 14, 17; 3: 7, 8, 13). This answering back is mentioned eight times in the fifty-four verses of the book. Second, the same sceptical and self-justifying habit exhibits itself in certain sayings which Malachi quotes as current among the people:

"Any one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and He delighteth in them" (2: 17). "Where is the God of judgment?" (2: 17). "It is in vain to serve God" (3: 14). "What profit that we have kept His ordinances, and walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?" (3: 14). "And now we congratulate the proud" (3: 15). "[There have been such things as that] doers of wickedness have been builded up." "[Men] have tempted God and escaped" (3: 15). W. J. B.

*Analysis of Contents.* The book forms one continuous composition addressed to an age of overt, though unavowed, national discontent and disaffection. Theocratic scepticism, born of moral obtuseness, is the evil which Malachi

confronts. The people look at their slow and humbling recovery, in place of the rapid and glorious progress prophecy had led them to anticipate, and they ask bitterly, "Is this God's peculiar love of His people?" The prophet's reply points them to the significant fact of Jehovah's persistent restoration of Israel to national existence, in contrast with the irretrievable downfall of their kinsmen the Edomites. That the reverses of fortunes should be Edom's destruction, but Israel's discipline, is proof that Israel possesses a unique place and destiny in the Divine purposes (1: 1-5).

The answer is adequate, but requires to be supplemented by an explanation of what is painful and perplexing in the present situation of tardy recovery. This is done by pointing out that the delay in fulfilling Israel's destiny is due not to Divine slackness, but to Israel's unworthiness and disloyalty to the covenant. The indictment consists of two parts, of which the first seizes and seathes with burning scorn the degradation of Divine worship, the corruptions of the priesthood and the social wrongs among the people (1: 6; 2: 16), while the second lays bare their roots in religious doubt of God's moral earnestness, the profitableness of His service, and His fidelity to fulfil the promises of the covenant (2: 17; 4: 6).

The people are unwilling to admit their culpability, and it is necessary for the prophet to drive his charges home. Sons honor their fathers, servants their masters, but Israel has no reverence, not even bare respect for God. For His worship they select the sorriest beasts of their flocks and the shabbiest remnants of their possessions, such as they would never think of presenting to the civil ruler, and in this loveless insult priests and people are unblushingly combined. Better far to shut the temple and to quench the altar's fire, for already in every land a worship ascends to Jehovah pure and warm and acceptable in His sight (1: 6-14).

The priests, chosen by God to be the fountain of law and justice and religion, promised therefore the Divine favor and the people's honor and support, have perverted their office, corrupted justice, alienated the laity from religion and morality, and have, therefore, in just recompense forfeited their power to bless, destroyed the dignity of their high vocation, and incurred universal obloquy and contempt (2: 1-9).

The people, forgetful of the obligations of theocratic brotherhood, reckless of the risk to religion and the continuity of a holy seed, have intermarried for sordid advantages with hea-

then neighbors, and aggravated their guilt by heartlessly putting away their Jewish wives, whose tears and plaints ascending to heaven in the temple court hide from God's eyes the sacrifice offered on the altar, and call down on the transgressors His righteous vengeance to root them and their houses out of His land and people (2: 10-16).

This moral degeneracy has its root in a deep-seated religious scepticism. The delay in the accomplishment of the covenant promises, conceived selfishly and superficially as Israel's material aggrandizement, has begotten doubt of God's moral earnestness. Does God judge on earth? Is He on the side of the good and against the wicked (Ps. 73)? The prophet meets the sneering misgiving with a stern declaration of the certainty of the judgment, an explanation of its delay because of Israel's unreadiness for it, and a description of God's speedy advent, in order that He may, first of all, purge unsparingly people and priesthood, and, secondly, execute relentless judgment on all persistent wickedness (2: 17-3: 6). Further, the depression in the material affairs of the nation has produced scepticism as to God's care for human homage—that is, in its material form, doubt of the profitableness of God's service. The prophet protests that it is precisely this half-heartedness of worship and dishonesty in giving God His dues, that is the cause of their continued misfortunes. He challenges the people to make experiment of a contrasted course of conduct, and see what a wealth of blessing it will bring (3: 7-12).

Finally, the Divine delay to right Israel among the comity of the nations has, on the one hand, set the ungodly sneering in unbelief, and on the other moved the devout to mutual conference and sad but trustful prayer and waiting. God is not blind as His silence might seem to suggest. He marks the loyalty of these, the defiance of those. Speedily He will speak out, and in the triumph of the just and the destruction of the unjust He will make forever unmistakable the eternal distinction of goodness and of evil. In a final manifestation of Divine grace and judgment God will avenge all wrong and establish all righteousness. He will make an end of sin, and gloriously reward His own, and so completely fulfil His covenant promises. In anticipation of that day Israel's duty is a loyal return to the spirit of the ancient law and prophecy. For that end Elijah, the great prophet of fidelity and national decision, shall return. Thus prepared, Israel can face the coming judgment without fear, and

welcome the consummation of the Divine covenant (3: 13; 4: 6). *Elmslie.*

The book opens with a brief introduction or preface (chap. 1: 1-4) the theme of which is, God's love to Israel a reason for a response of love to Him. After the introduction come the three main sections of the book: (1) On the impiety and profanity of the priests; (2) on the heathen marriages of the priests and people; and (3) on the day of the Lord.

Section I. extends from chap. 1: 6 to chap. 2: 9. It is addressed to the priests, who had despised the name of Jehovah, and laid defective and polluted offerings on His altar. They are rebuked for the mercenary and perfunctory spirit of their service, and for despising the worship which they themselves had rendered despicable. They are threatened with the Divine curse and punishment if they continue in their sins, but are assured that the threatening is designed to bring them to repentance and amendment. Perhaps their severest rebuke is contained in that fine sketch of the true priest (chap. 2: 5-7) with which this section draws to a close—one of the most admired and suggestive passages in the whole book:

"My covenant of life and of peace was with him,  
And I gave them to him,  
For the fear which he shewed for Me,  
And the awe in which he stood of my Name.  
The law of truth was in his mouth,  
And no iniquity was found in his lips;  
He walked with Me in peace and integrity,  
And brought back many from guilt:  
For the priest's lips should preserve knowledge,  
And men should seek the law at his mouth."

Section II. extends only from verse 10 to verse 16 of chap. 2. This section is addressed to the people as well as to the priests, and reproves a sin of which both had been guilty. In defiance of the law of Moses, they had treacherously and wrongfully divorced their Hebrew wives, that they might take to themselves consorts from the idolatrous daughters of Moab and Philistia. The sighs and tears of the wronged women "cover the altar of Jehovah," so that He no longer regarded the offerings that were laid upon it. They are warned that, by these divorces and forbidden alliances, they are violating not the law of Moses alone, but the pure marriage law which God had given to man "in the beginning."

Section III. extends from chap. 2: 17 to chap. 4: 4, and has for its main theme that "day of the Lord," that day of judgment ushering in a golden age of purity and concord, of which all the prophets had spoken. The Lord *will* come, though He *tarry*, come when they look not for

Him, come to try and to refine His people. Let them repent, therefore, and renounce their sins, that they may be able to abide the day of His coming and to stand when He appeareth. God will be faithful to His promises; they need not question that, as though it were a vain thing to serve Him. And when He comes to fulfil them, He will divide the righteous from the wicked; He will deliver the wicked as stubble to the flames, and cause the Sun of Righteousness to arise on the righteous, with healing in His wings.

The prophecy concludes with a brief admonition (chap. 4: 4-6), in which they are enjoined to remember the law of Moses, but to look for the coming of a better law; to stand in the old ways, but to look for the new. In fine, Malachi is "like a late evening which brings a long day to a close;" but he is also like a morning dawn, which brings with it the promise of a new and more glorious day.

With more fulness and distinctness than most of the prophets, he teaches us that that day of blended judgment and mercy of which they had all spoken dawned upon the world when, for the fall and rising of many, the Son of Man manifesteth forth His glory. Not only does the last of the prophets foresee the Gospel day, on which the Sun of Righteousness is to shine out with unclouded splendor; he also foresees the bright morning star which is to herald and announce its advent. And thus Malachi is a link between the two dispensations and covenants. As we close the Old Testament we catch a glimpse of the Christ whom we are to meet, and with whom we are to walk, in the New Testament; and of the Baptist who came before Him, in the power and spirit of Elijah, to prepare His way, and to attest that this was He of whom Moses and the prophets did write.

*Cor.*

**Chap. I.** To show the people their great guilt, the Lord testifies to His special love for their nation, particularly as compared with the posterity of Esau (verses 2-5); rebukes the priests for their contempt of His worship (verses 6-10); assures them that He will find countless sincere worshippers among the heathen (verse 11); exposes and denounces their heinous sins (verses 12-14).

**1.** This prophecy, as a whole, comprises so much rebuke for sin and threatening of judgment that it may fitly be called a "burden" in the usual sense—sins and judgments, which it is a heart-burden to think of and to reveal. H. C.

**2-5.** The "oracle" or prophecy of Malachi

opens with a few prefatory verses on Jehovah's love for the sons of Israel—a theme of which the whole book is but a series of variations. And it is surely most appropriate that the closing Scripture of the Old Testament should have for its ruling theme that Divine inalienable love the supreme manifestation of which the New Testament was to record. *Cor.*

**2.** *The keynote is love.* "I have loved you, saith the Lord." The whole of the message comes out of this. What is their present state but an ungrateful rejection of Divine love, and dishonoring of the Divine covenant? *Phelps.*

**2, 3.** The Lord begins His endeavors to convict the Jews of sin by setting before them the special love He had borne for their nation ever since Jacob was chosen to be the heir of His promises and Esau was rejected. This hating of Esau was rather a *not-loving*, and looks especially to the fact that God rejected him from being the heir of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac. The history shows that Esau did not value the inheritance of those promises. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls him "that profane person," as if to intimate that his rejection was not an arbitrary act of God in the sense of being irrespective of Esau's ill desert. As to the words "I hated Esau," let it be carefully noted that God's hatred is never malign and never causeless.

The key to this passage, as to many others, is the fact we are so apt to forget, that God does nothing arbitrarily; that He has a reason, a good and kind reason, for all His choices and acts. We are not here told what His reason for hating Edom was. Nor could we arrive at all the reasons that went to make up His reason without reviewing the entire history of Israel and Edom, and the bearing of that history on the history and welfare of the whole world. If, for wise and kind ends that embraced the welfare of the whole world, God loved Israel, He could do no other than hate Edom, the insolent and implacable foe of Israel. And that His love for Israel did embrace ends of mercy that went beyond Israel is hinted in the closing lines of this brief preface:

"And your eyes shall see it, and ye shall say,  
Great is Jehovah beyond the border of Israel!"

*Cor.*

**3.** God loved Jacob and hated Esau. The first of these sayings is uttered by Malachi, the last of the prophets, at a time when God had given Israel the most signal proof of His mercy by bringing His people back from their captivity in Babylon. Before the prophet's eyes was

Israel, restored against all human expectations, and at the same time the land of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, utterly devastated. At this sight, comparing the opposite conditions of those two kindred and neighboring nations, he places upon the lips of Jehovah these words which sum up the whole of their history: "I have loved Jacob and I have hated Esau." Is it arbitrarily or capriciously that God has conceived this sentiment? The Old Testament says nothing of the sort. It represents Esau as a carnal and profane man, incapable in any way of serving the purposes of God for the establishment of the reign of faith; and the nation descended from him had followed in the footsteps of its first father. Was it not the Edomites who rejoiced in the day of the ruin of Jerusalem, who, with a diabolical hatred, urged the victors to overthrow it even to its very foundations, and who lay in ambush along the wayside, waiting to rob and murder the unhappy fugitives? That is why, though the elder of the two branches, Esau and his race, favored as they were with temporal blessings, were morally rejected, while Jacob and his descendants were substituted for them, in view of the superior work which God meant to accomplish. In this there is no arbitrary hatred, no capricious preference; there is a free choice, independent, no doubt, of the human law of primogeniture, but a wise choice akin to that of the artisan who adapts the tool to the work he intends to perform. *Goal.*

The Bible does not say that Esau lost the birthright by Jacob's cheating him out of it. It does not say that Jacob, by attempting to steal the blessing that was designed for Esau, actually secured any good for himself, or took away any good from Esau. Esau lost the birthright because he despised it. He showed this in agreeing to the bargain. But he also showed it in the habits of life he adopted. He preferred a life of excitement, and he knew that he was thus unfitting himself both for enjoying the birthright and for performing the duties it would impose. He married Hittite and Horite wives, knowing that this unfitted him for exercising his birthright; and, as a matter of fact, these marriages, by drawing him to the Horite country, ultimately effected the separation between him and the birthright. Of his own free will he abandoned the promised land, thus eventually losing all his claims there (Gen. 26: 6-8). Meanwhile, Jacob, after wasting half his life in a bootless contest with God over the matter, at last surrendered all his false claims, and let God lead him; and God led him into the

possession of all the blessings that Esau had abandoned. W. J. B.

**3, 4.** Whenever the Edomites have set themselves to build themselves up, God has pulled them down. To this day Petra and its dependent towns are "desolate cities," the houses of which "none should inhabit, ordained to be ruins" by God Himself. To this day the rangers of the desert hurry by the abandoned tenements and temples, and through the long rock-hewn avenues, deeming them perilous and accursed, and muttering prayers for the Divine protection. Here, then, according to Malachi, was the proof that God loved Israel. They might be few, feeble, despised, and exposed to a thousand calamities and dangers. Nevertheless, they were at least redeemed from their captivity; Jerusalem was fast rising from their ruins; the temple was rebuilt; a bright prospect of hope illumined their future. Whereas they had but to look out on the mountain range which formed the southern rampart of their land to descry the home of other children of Abraham who were still captives in a strange land, whose cities were left unto them desolate, whose prospect was darkened by an ever-deepening gloom, a night to which there would be no dawn. To what was this difference, this preference, owing, but to the love of Jehovah? *Cor.*

Most remarkably have these words been fulfilled. The style of the remains existing in Petra, the metropolis of Edom, shows that they were framed at dates posterior to the time of this prophecy; and we know in fact historically, that it subsequently became a rich and flourishing city. The intention of the Edomites, as disclosed by the prophet, was therefore accomplished by themselves and their successors; but the Lord's intention has also been accomplished. Of the Edomites themselves, not even a name remains; and their city has for ages remained broken and desolate. The very site, indeed, had long been uncertain, and its place was undetermined in the maps. But, as in the index which closes a book, the various events of centuries are crowded into a few pages; so in these latter days, events that used to be spread over centuries are crowded together into days and years, and the old world history seems tame to the history we live. In this wonderful age events come in "Multitudes, multitudes to the valley of decision;" and old cities and nations—Egypt, Assyria, Edom; Thebes, Nineveh, Petra, are called forth from their tombs; and rattling their dry bones together, and shaking off the time-crust of

many ages, they stand up in grim array to bear witness to God's truth. Edom was called— and Petra answered to her name. There she stands beautiful in her coat of many colors; but empty, and void, and waste. Singularly beautiful even in ruin, and with the freshness of youth still upon her brow, the utter desolation in which "the daughter of Edom" lies shut up amid the silence of her mountains, is most impressive and even affecting. *Kittó*.

6. This reasoning from the honor due and usually accorded to a father is full of force as applied to the great God. How much more a Father is He than any of these "fathers of our flesh," and how much greater! Most forcibly, therefore, does He demand from us, "Where is My honor?" "Where is My fear?" This appeal was made with special pertinence to the priests to whom God had given high responsibilities and ample means of knowing His name and His love. H. C.—If God were disposed to relinquish His claim, the usurpation of another master might be yielded to with the more plausible pretence; but this is not the case. If we believe His word, He never means to part with His right over His creatures. "If I am a Father, where is My reverence? if I am a master, where is My fear?" He cannot suppose, without the utmost absurdity, He will ever divest Himself of His authority, which He could never do without impairing His dignity, and introducing confusion into His empire. He owes it to Himself not to relinquish what we owe to Him. *R. Hall*.

The Fatherhood of God does not subvert the authority of moral law. It does not excuse sin. It summons and encourages to holiness. Mercy does not exclude justice any more than justice excludes mercy. Both are equally universal, and co-operate at every step. It is a great doctrine of judgment which pervades the writings of the minor prophets. These mighty preachers taught that God chastised men because He loved them, that the fiercest retribution moved within redemptive lines. God lets us eat the husks and experience all the bitter harvest of wrong-doing, that we may be brought to ourselves and so return to Him in penitence. No man, therefore, who makes real to himself the unspeakable love of God for him can become indifferent to his moral state. To him God will always be a consuming fire. But on the other hand, the reflection that the moral rule of God is paternal, that love pervades holiness as fire permeates a mass of molten metal, that the perdition of a single soul entails an irreparable loss upon Himself, to avert which

He exerts Himself to the utmost, is the mightiest of all incentives to repentance, and the most powerful argument to patience. He is waiting and watching for every one of you, anxious to give the signal which shall make all the bells of heaven ring out because you have come home. *Behrens*.

We may each of us charge upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. We are every one of us to look upon God as our Father and Master, and upon ourselves as His children and servants. Our relation to God as our Father and Master strongly obliges us to fear and honor Him. If we honor and fear the fathers of our flesh, much more the Father and Master of our spirits (Heb. 12: 9). It is a thing to be justly complained of, and lamented, that God is so little feared and honored even by those that own Him for their Father and Master. Where is His honor? Where is His fear? H.

*And ye say.* From this verse to chap. 2, verse 9, the prophet reproves the priests and the people for sacrificing the refuse of beasts, which, according to the law, ought to have been rejected; and denounces punishment against the priests for not teaching the people their duty in this respect. *Abp. Newcome*.

7. *Mine altar; the table of the Lord.* These names may be indifferently used for signifying either the altar or the table of shewbread: and by "polluted bread" may be understood either bread, properly so called, or else the flesh of the sacrifices; so that whether we understand by this variety of words the same or different things—viz., the shewbread by some, and the sacrifices by others, the scope will be the same—that is, to declare the contempt they had of God's service, and that not in one particular kind only, but in all. *Poole*.

7, 8. The ceremonial law specified, with almost extreme precision, what offerings should be made and how prepared, laying the greatest stress on their being the *very best of their kind*. The significance of this is obvious. No greater insult could be offered to God than to turn Him off with the refuse of their flocks and herds, and with polluted bread for His altar! Yet this the priests of that day had done, and moreover seemed still to have no sense of their horrible sin! Forcibly does the Lord say, "Offer such presents to your governor; will he feel himself honored?" H. C.

10. The sense of the passage is this: It were better that the temple doors were closed, and that the sacrifices should cease to be offered, than that they should be offered in a form not acceptable to God. B. C.—The service they

did render was done in supreme selfishness, for they would not even close the doors of the temple or kindle the fire upon the altar without special pay for it. So utterly mercenary and heartless had they become in all their religious duties ! No wonder the Lord declares to them, " I have no pleasure in you ! " The pure, loving heart is above all things else first and highest in His esteem ; it might almost be said to be *all* He cares for. II. C.

The entire Christian life must bear the character of a daily renewed thank-offering to the glory of Him who in grace bestowed a perfect atonement in Christ Jesus ; a thank offering of willing, undivided devotion of ourselves, with all that is ours, to Him. How much easier would it be once for all to die for the cause of God than, throughout a long course of years, day by day, to live to His glory ! How much does it already cost to offer willingly to Him that which we most prize of our possessions ; and how much more does it include daily to lay upon the altar before Him our hearts, with all their wishes and desires ! But for what other purpose is man, as head of earthly creatures, placed below in such a temple, save that he as priest should offer such a sacrifice, daily consecrating to Him the spiritual offerings of self-denial, love and unconditional obedience ? The Israelite might not bring within the holy gates aught that had blemish ; and can the Christian dare to speak of faith or gratitude while in his conscience anything remains impure or insincere toward his God ? *Van O.*

If we reflect that what we are called upon to offer to God is nothing less than ourselves, our souls and bodies, it must at once be seen that in that *perfect, holy, living sacrifice* is included every element of character, of endowment, of circumstance, by which each one of us is made to differ from others. Thus it is that not only as men, or as citizens, or as members of families, but as believers in Christ, we have severally a definite and personal work to do, for which we have received in our powers and in our positions the requisite equipment. Only let us be faithful to the ministry which we have received, without attempting to estimate its value or measure its efficacy : only let us be sure that religion is the consecration of our whole nature and not the special attribute of any one part of it ; only let us come to God such as we are, bowed down it may be with the burden of toil and care, without the opportunity, as it seems, of preparing an offering for His acceptance : and He will welcome and purify and hallow all that we lay before

Him. The results of silent service, of complete self surrender, of patient trust, cannot be measured by our present experience. They survive us on earth and they follow us before the very throne of heaven. We are called then in Christ daily to bring to God our whole selves. This, and nothing less than this, is our rational service. And if so our religion will be as manifold and as personal as our lives, active now through this gift, now through that, and hallowing with the cross all that is truly human. *Bp. Westcott.*

When the hour came in which the true worshippers worshipped the Father in Spirit and in truth, then this incense was offered, even this pure offering. Instead of His being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a small people in a corner of the world, He will be served and worshipped in all places, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same ; in every place, in every part of the world, incense shall be offered to His name ; nations shall be disciplined, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them in their own language. This is a plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace, by which the Gentiles, who had been strangers and foreigners, came to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It is twice said (for the thing was certain), My name shall be great among the Gentiles. II.

Let us not contrast our sacrifices and zeal merely with those of the Master whose name we bear, and whom we have avouched as our Great Exemplar : let us but measure our endeavors, in their number, and in the prudence, liberality, and perseverance that mark them, with the efforts and spirit of the men of this world, who are without hope and without God. Yielding up the comforts of home and the society of friends, forswearing ease, peevish character, lavishing life, and venturing even upon eternal ruin, as they do, the walks of this world's business and of this world's pleasures are strewn with the voluntary and costly sacrifices of time, property, comfort, life and salvation. But we, with a soul to save, a heaven to lose or win, a Christ to publish, and a God to serve—how shamefully calm are we found, and timid and half hearted ! And this, while the world is rushing into ruin, and bearing on its swollen and rapid stream our friends, our neighbors and our children ; while the earth which God has promised to bless (and that by human instrumentality) lies as yet, prostrate

and groaning, under the curse poured out through all her coasts. The time is coming, and prophecy has foretold it, when in every land there shall be offered to God a pure offering—when, from the closet and the sanctuary, from the hill top, the field, and the forest-side, where the children of God shall, like Isaac, walk forth at eventide to meditate, the voice of pious supplication shall ascend in one continuous stream; until our globe, as it rolls along its orbit, shall seem but a censor revolving in the hand of the great High-Priest, and pouring out at every aperture a cloud, dense and rich, of incense, fragrant and grateful to God. But, as yet, the ascending cloud is one of far other kind. Its skirts are dark with sullen gloom, and its bosom is charged with indignation and vengeance. Wailing and blasphemy, oppression and outrage, pollution and falsehood, have swollen and blackened it; and with it, a cry goes up, like that from the cities of the plain, piercing the ear of God. Day unto day uttereth speech of human wretchedness, and night unto night showeth knowledge of human wickedness. What has *our* faith done for its relief? W. R. W.

**12-11.** The prophet returns again to the sins of the priests, exposing and rebuking them with deserved severity. Who can wonder that the curse of Jehovah falls on such priests and on all such worshippers at His altar? How can He regard it as better than intended insult? Verily God is too great and too holy to be so contemned! Woe to the man who offers such abuse to the Great King whose "name is dreadful among the heathen!" H. C.

The charge against the priests is resumed in verses 12, 13, in which we have another graphic picture of their listless and perfunctory ministry. As we study it, we see them lounging about the temple courts, desecrating the name of the Lord by the insolent contempt with which they bring stolen and lame and sick beasts for sacrifice, finding the service an intolerable burden which ought to be their honor and pride, snuffing at the pollutions they themselves have laid on the altar, despising the sacrifices which they themselves have rendered despicable, and crying as they went about their

ministry, "What a weariness it is!" Such a picture gives us a far clearer insight into the moral and religious condition of the Hebrews of this time than the facts chronicled in the Book of Nehemiah, and helps us to realize the utter debasement from which that brave and disinterested governor attempted to raise them. For it was "like priest, like people." When the ministers of the altar treated it with supercilious contempt, how should the people honor it? They did not honor it. They took the priestly infection only too readily, and showed their contempt for the altar which the priest despised by bringing to it illegal offerings and sacrifices. Malachi gives us two instances of such contemptuous and fraudulent violations of the law, and leaves us to infer the rest from these (verse 14). *Cor.*

**13.** *Should I accept this of your hand?* Imagine that you go to your place of retirement reluctantly, listlessly. Your mind, perhaps, is in a state of reaction from the excitements of the day. You are indisposed to *thought* of any kind. You have no eagerness of search after God; it is not the struggling cry of your heart, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" From sheer reluctance to endure the labor of thinking, you neglect preparatory meditation. You read the Scriptures indolently; you do not expect or seek for a spur to your own conceptions, in the words of inspired thinkers. Or, imagine that, in the act of prayer, your mind dreams its way through a dialect of dead words; it floats on the current of a stereotyped phraseology, which once leaped with life from the lips of holy men who originated it; but some of which, your memory obliges you to confess, never *had* any vitality in your own thoughts. It was never *original* with you; you have never worked it out in your own experience; you have never *lived* it; it has never forced itself into expression, as the fruit of self-knowledge or of self-conflict.

Imagine this as a scene of real life in the closet. Is this a caricature of some possible modes of secret devotion? And if it is not, is it marvellous that *such* devotion should be afflicted with a want of enjoyment of the Divine presence? "Should I accept *this* of your hand? saith the Lord." *Phelps.*

## MALACHI, CHAPTER II.

- 2:1, 2** AND now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke the seed for your sake, and will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your sacrifices; and ye shall be taken away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him that he might fear, and he feared me, and stood in awe of my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are turned aside out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble in the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have had respect of persons in the law.
- 10** Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loveth, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. The LORD will cut off to the man that doeth this him that waketh and him that answereth, out of the tents of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. And this again ye do: ye cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, inasmuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, neither receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith the LORD, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.
- 17** Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or where is the God of judgment?

**Chap. 2.** The corrupt priests are specially exhorted, rebuked, and threatened (verses 1-9); the sin of practically divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying heathen women is condemned (verses 10-16); and finally the priests are rebuked for denying the justice of God in His providential government (verse 17). H. C.

**1-3.** If the people, and above all the priests, despise and dishonor Him whom even the foreigner and the heathen are beginning to respect, they cannot hope to escape condign punishment. Nor will they escape it. Jehovah will repay their contempt for Him by exposing them to the last extremities of ignominy. If they do not repent, if they do not give glory to His Name, He will convert their priestly benedictions into curses, as indeed He has done

already; He will make them as the refuse of the festal sacrifices, and cause them to be swept out of the Temple with it. *Cor.*

**1, 2.** The priests had been deeply guilty in the great apostasy of that age. They had not only failed altogether to teach the people faithfully and truly for God, but they had fearfully seduced them into sin by their pernicious example. Hence the prophet gives them to understand very explicitly that this message of command and rebuke is for them. The threatening is not merely "I will send a curse"—some unknown, indefinite curse—but the curse (so the original has it), referring doubtless to De. 27: 14-26, "And the Levites shall say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, Cursed be he," etc., "and all the people shall say,



Amen!" To this fearful catalogue of twelve curses the prophet must have referred. To "curse your blessings" is to change them to curses. H. C.

2. This phrase, "I will curse your blessings," is peculiar. It is to be explained as an allusion to Deuteronomy, chap. 28, where specific blessings are promised on condition of obedience ("Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field," etc.), and corresponding specific curses denounced for disobedience ("Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field," etc.). The phrases of Malachi, "If ye will not hear," "I will send the curse upon you," are substantially quoted from De. 28: 15, 20, and the rest of the statement in Malachi is a *résumé* of the contents of the passage in Deuteronomy. Further, when Malachi says (2: 3), "I am rebuking the seed for your sake," he alludes to the "rebuke in all that thou puttest thy hand unto" of De. 28: 20. In fine, Malachi here formally cites the law of blessings and curses as laid down in De. 28, and declares that it is applicable to the priests of his time, and that their unprosperous condition is to be thus accounted for. Malachi follows this up by citing another "commandment" (Mal. 2: 4, 5). This time the commandment is that of the covenant of the priesthood (Num. 25: 10-13), and perhaps other places. These two instances are characteristic. Malachi assumes that the laws and promises of the times of the Exodus were applicable to his own times. W. J. B.

Blessings may be made fatal curses. This holds true with blessings of every kind: with station and wealth, with bodily health and vigor, with great powers of mind, with large means of spiritual improvement. To whom much is given, of him shall be much required. It is required of us to enjoy our blessings by using them: so will they be blessings indeed. So it is with money and influence, with health, with talents and with spiritual knowledge. T. A.

Gifts unemployed for Christ are stripped off a soul yonder. How much will go from many a richly endowed spirit, which here flashed with unconsecrated genius and force! We do not need to wait for eternity to see that true possession, which is use, increases powers, and that the disuse, which is equivalent to not possessing, robs of them. A. M.

3. The words imply a doom both publicly disgraceful and intrinsically loathsome. Themselves shall be thrown out and borne away with the offal of their sacrifices, in one promiscuous mass.

5. This seems to refer to some events in the early history of Israel, in which the tribe of Levi manifested a special regard for the name and honor of God, and for this reason was honored with the covenant of the perpetual priesthood. The reference may be either to Ex. 32: 26-29, or to Num. 25: 7-13, or to both. In the former case the whole tribe of Levi came forth promptly to the call of Moses, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and girding on each man his sword, they slew the worshippers of the golden calf wherever they were, sparing not even a brother, companion, or neighbor. To this case Moses reverts (De. 33: 9, 10) in his last blessing upon the tribes. The other case, that of Phineas, has in its favor the fact that for his zeal the Lord said of him: "Behold I give unto him My covenant of peace," H. C.

6, 7. It is the *ideal priest* whom the prophet has in his mind, the archetype to which every true priest will seek to be conformed. The true priest is one with whom, for his holy fear and self-devoting zeal, God has made a covenant of life and peace—that is, of being and of well-being, for all the blessings that make up human welfare were summed up for the Hebrew in one word—peace. "The law of truth"—the truths which have their root in the Divine law—is the staple of his instructions; it is ever in his mouth; "and no iniquity"—*i.e.*, no sinister perversion of truth, inspired by self-interest or class-interest—is "found in his lips." He "*walks*" with God in a happy *consent and progress*; for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" And to walk is not only to move, but to move onward and forward. Not only does he walk with God, he walks with Him "in integrity and peace:" two lines of advance are specially marked out for him—the generous uprightness, which saves his teaching from sinister perversions, rules his personal conduct, so that he is drawn aside by no selfish or impure motive: and, moreover, he possesses himself ever more fully of all the blessings which conduce to peace or well being. And thus, by his own pure and happy life, no less than by his wholesome and unperverted doctrine, he "brings back many from guilt," convincing the sinful of the mistake they have made, and leading them, through repentance, to that way of life and peace in which he himself is advancing. Nor in all this does he do more than is required of him by his vocation. For whose "lips *should* preserve knowledge?"—a knowledge of the Divine Will as revealed in the law of truth, if not his at whose mouth, as at its native home, men seek that law, "be-

cause he is the angel or messenger of the Lord of Hosts?" *Cor.*

His conversation was of a piece with his doctrine. God Himself gives him this honorable testimony. He walked with Me in peace and equity. He did not think it enough to talk of God, but he walked with Him; the temper of his mind and the tenor of his life were of a piece with his doctrine and profession; he lived a life of communion with God, and made it his constant care and business to please Him. He answered the ends of his office, he did turn many away from iniquity, he made it his business to do good, and God crowned his endeavors with wonderful success; he helped to save many a soul from death, and there are multitudes now in heaven, blessing God that ever they knew him. Those ministers, and those only, are like to turn men from iniquity that preach sound doctrine and live good lives, and both according to the Scripture; for as one of the rabbins observes here, When the priest is upright, many will be upright. II.

8, 9. The priests of Malachi's time not only fell short of this pure and lofty ideal—all have done that, save only the great High-Priest of our Confession—but they openly and insolently renounced and reversed it. Instead of keeping the way of integrity in their personal conduct, they had "departed from the way" (verse 8). Instead of shedding light on the path of peace by their instructions, they had cast stumbling-blocks before the feet of those who were striving to keep it, and turned them aside, "making many to stumble at the law" in place of smoothing the way for them. And thus they had "corrupted the covenant with Levi;" Jehovah no longer holds Himself bound by it, since they no longer breathe the fidelity and zeal to which it was granted. As they have forsaken His ways, and have driven others to forsake them by their injustice and greed, He will make them as base and despicable in the sight of all the people as His service and covenant have become in their sight—unless, indeed, they should repent and amend, "observe His ways" and "give glory to His Name" (verse 9).

Thus ends the section on the priests and their sins. They are convicted of their guilt. They are menaced with retribution. They are shown what they ought to be, and invited to repent and amend. And as the picture of the ideal priest is the most beautiful passage of this section, so also it is the most suggestive; and that, not simply because, since we are all priests unto God by the grace of Christ, it teaches us

what manner of men *we* ought to be, but also because it illustrates the high moral tone of the Hebrew prophets. When *they* speak of the meaning and essence of sacrifice, they do not represent Jehovah as requiring bullocks and rams. The cattle on a thousand hills are His. They represent Him as speaking with a large scorn of the oblations and offerings that were laid on His altar. What He required was an obedient will, a contrite spirit, a thankful heart; that men should do justice, show mercy and walk humbly with Him. And when they speak of the true priest, it is not his ceremonial exactness in the service of the altar which they hold up to admiration, but his truth, his integrity, his wisdom as a teacher, the moral sweetness of his personal character. And it really is very fine to observe with what native ease Malachi rises into this higher region of thought. While dwelling on the sins of the priests, he moves in the lower, the ceremonial, element; he insists on the maimed rites and blemished sacrifices, on the perfunctory and contemptuous spirit with which they lounged through the service of the Temple. But no sooner does he attempt to frame a conception of what the true priest should be than all *that* is forgotten; we hear no more of altar and sacrifice; his thoughts are riveted on the moral aspects of the priestly vocation—how holy a man, how wise a teacher, how careful and friendly a guide, the priest should be. When we are thinking only to hear that the sons of Levi are to offer clean and perfect instead of blemished and polluted sacrifices, to delight in the ministrations of the sanctuary instead of despising them, as much to our surprise as pleasure he places before us a lofty spiritual ideal of character and service well-nigh, if not altogether, beyond the reach of mortal powers; he pronounces an eulogium on Levi which we should hardly dare to inscribe as an epitaph on the tomb of the holiest saint, or even on that of an inspired apostle—

*"The law of truth was in his mouth,  
And no iniquity was found in his lips;  
He walked with Me in peace and integrity,  
And brought back many from guilt."*

*Cor.*

10-16. This passage is best understood when considered as one distinct and entire subject. It refers to the sin of practically or actually putting away their Hebrew wives, and taking wives from the idolatrous heathen. Even the priests had done this; and, indeed, they seem to have been foremost. (See Neh. 13: 23-29.) With a masterly hand the prophet

calls their attention first in order to the very highest moral considerations—to their obligations to God, their common Father, which bind them to deal faithfully and forbid them to deal treacherously against their fellow-beings, children of the same common Father. In the clause "every man against his brother," etc., the thing in mind is the obligation that binds a man to fidelity with his wife. "Brother" is used in the general sense of fellow-creature—one who is a child of the same Creator. "The covenant of our fathers" is the covenant of marriage, ordained of God, and given first to the common father of our race. In the clause (verse 11) "Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved," I take the sense to be, that the people of Judah had abused and dishonored the sacredness which the Lord had attached to His own people in forbidding intermarriages with the heathen, and requiring them to marry within the pale of the covenant people. The Lord had felt a special interest in this law. It recognized a certain holiness in His own people which He had valued as a distinction vital to the preservation of morals and piety among them. The priests and people had profaned this sacredness by marrying the daughters of strange gods—heathen idolatrous women. In verse 12 it is said, "The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this," be he who he may. This is the ultimate sense of the original rendered, "the master and the scholar." Its proximate sense, however, is not "master and scholar," but "the waker and the answerer," with reference to the night-watch of the priests or Levites in the temple where the party retiring from their watch aroused their successors, who answered to their call. The two parties taken together might include all. The description should apply to the priests; this does, and, moreover, follows strictly the sense of the original. In verse 13, "done this again," means ye have a second time relapsed into this great sin, the first time being that great apostasy from which they were reclaimed under Ezra. (See Ezra 9.) This reform seemed for the time to be thorough, but subsequently the people and priests apostatized again. They "covered the altar of God with tears," inasmuch as the Hebrew wives, supplanted in the affections of their husbands by heathen wives, fled to the altar to lay their case before the God of their fathers there, and to pour out their sorrows into His ear, and their tears upon His altar. Such scenes as these touched the heart of God, and He could no longer accept the offerings brought to this same altar by

these adulterous and apostate priests. The self justifying priests still say, "Wherefore?" [Why make this ado about a thing so trivial?] Because Jehovah is witness between thee and the wife with whom thou hast dealt treacherously. The prophet closes with repeating the exhortation no more to deal treacherously with the wife of their first sacred covenant. II. C.

The children of Israel were to be a *holy*—i.e., a separate people, a people marked off and set apart to Jehovah; not because He did not love other races, but because He did love them, and chose one race to be the channel through which His truth and mercy should flow to all races. But if this one family or tribe was to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, it must, at least for a time, be set apart from and raised above them. Hence the laws forbidding intermarriage with the heathen. From the very beginning, too, the Hebrews were taught that the marriage tie was a permanent union, and that, save for the gravest cause, those whom God had joined together should not be put asunder. Though, as our Lord explains, owing to their "hardness of heart," Moses was compelled to write a precept of divorce, nevertheless his legislation marked an immense advance on the common morality of the time. He taught them that marriage, in place of being a merely natural and temporary alliance, was a solemn covenant to which God Himself was witness; and, instead of permitting them to break the conjugal bonds on any whim and without any legal act, he allowed divorce only in cases of flagrant infidelity, and enjoined that a formal bill or writing be given into the hand of the offending wife. It is to this legislation, and to the influence of it age after age, that we attribute the domestic purity and the aversion to alien marriages which characterize the modern Jews. The influence of their code and history has been about them generation after generation like an atmosphere; they have breathed it unconsciously; it has entered into their very blood. But it was long before they learned their lesson. For many centuries the ancient Hebrews found it almost as hard to be content with one wife as it was to be content with one God, almost as difficult to refrain from the daughters as from the deities of their neighbors—nay, they found it harder and more difficult. For during the Captivity they did learn that there is but one God over all, and forever renounced their idolatries; but long after the return from the Captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah saw, with indignation and dismay, that both people and priests had taken to wife the daugh-

ters of foreign races, and that thus "the holy seed had been mingled with the people of strange lands." Worse still, in order to ally themselves with these strange women, many of them had violated the law, divorcing their Hebrew wives without cause. Against this double crime under their law Malachi utters these words of rebuke and denunciation in the name of Jehovah. *Cor.*

**13.** Marriage involves a union altogether peculiar. In its perfection it is a spiritual union, and only in it does the life of each party become complete. That this union should be, and should be understood to be for life, is essential to the interests of both parties, to the welfare of children, and to the interests of the State. Only on the condition of such understanding can there be a perfect commitment of each to each, and that perfect community of interest and of life which radically separates marriage from all forms of prostitution and unlawful cohabitation. As thus peculiar and sacred, the original institution of God was that the union should be of one man with one woman, and for life. Under the Mosaic dispensation divorce was permitted on various grounds, but the original ground and sacredness of marriage was not lost sight of. This appears from a remarkable passage in Malachi showing the unreasonableness and evils of both polygamy and divorce, and the displeasure of God toward them. "And this," says he, "have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, inasmuch that He regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand." What a picture! Poor wronged women bathing the altar of God with their tears; those who did the wrong seeking to be religious by offerings while they yet held on to the wrong; God rejecting their offerings, asserting the law of marriage, declaring that He made one woman for a perpetual union with one man that the children might be trained for Himself, and implying that this could be done in no other way. The original law of marriage, thus asserted by Malachi, Christ fully restored. *M. Hopkins.*

**14.** *Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth.* "Because the Lord hath been witness" of the contract or matrimonial promises, made according to His law, and with solemn invocation of His name, "between thee and the wife of thy youth"—that is, her whom thou tookest in thy youth, but with whom thou now dealest treacherously, though she were "thy companion," made so according to the institution of God (Gen. 2 : 24 ;

Matt. 19 : 5) : "and the wife of thy covenant," by mutual covenant espoused to thee. The conditions of this covenant, God, being witness to it, regards as necessarily binding on both parties, and requires the due performance of it from both. *Peacock.*

**15.** The original formation of one man and one woman into "one flesh" or conjugal body, contemplated the rearing of a pious offspring. Other and inferior ends were to be secured by it, but this was its ultimate design. "He did not design it (remarks Howe) merely that there might be a continual descent of human nature, but that religion might still be transmitted from age to age; and this design He never quits." Marriage was a divinely conceived idea for the manifestation of God in man. *J. Harris.*

Did not God at the beginning make but *one* wife for man? Yet had he the residue, the fulness, the excellency of the spirit. He might have multiplied the human species without number by separate acts of creation; yet He made but one man and one woman. And wherefore, asks the prophet, did He make but one? "That He might seek a godly seed"—that the family might become the educator of the race in the knowledge and the love of God; that the father who should transmit to his son his own physical likeness might also impress upon him the likeness of God; that thus holiness might be hereditary and perpetual; that the life of God, beginning in that mysterious and sacred union in Eden, might flow on in channels of love and purity till the end of time. Alas, that the fountain became corrupt, and has sent forth streams of bitterness and death! *J. P. T.*

Well might the mind be haunted, age after age, with a family ideal never yet realized! Life a sacred thing. Every child a Divine promise. Every family beginning the race anew from a higher point. Brothers and sisters ministering angels to each other's purity and beneficence. Every addition a new element of happiness. Education the rearing of a living temple. Conjugal love a central fountain in warm, fragrant, perpetual play. The father the representative of God; feeding them, as a prophet, with more than angels' food; as a priest, standing at the portico of the temple, to guard it from pollution, or ministering at its holy altar, and finding his spirit purified and refreshed by the service. The mother, the earliest to enter the infant heart, and to take possession in the name of God; radiating on her children the light and life of her own in-

tense affection, and invested in addition with the delegated and solemn reverence of paternal authority. Home, the home of the affections, where law is superseded by love, where the lowliest act is consecrated and ennobled by the highest motive, and where separate individual interests are forgotten in the aim of each for the good of all. The family, sending forth its youthful members—each with a heritage of happy recollections and holy habits, impressed with the sanctity and high responsibilities of the domestic constitution, studiously trained and qualified to enter on them, and determined to raise still higher, if possible, in his own new circle, the standard of his own early home. Such are the capabilities of the family, and the sunny visions at which it hints.  
*J. Harris.*

17. The sins of the priests had at bottom a deep apostasy in principle and theory from the living God. They had ceased to vindicate the ways of God to man; had ceased to think and speak well of His government; had ceased to regard Him as holy, just and good. II. C.—They denied Him to be the righteous Governor of the world. If He did not delight in sinners, yet it would serve their turn to believe that He would never punish it or them. They

said, "Where is the God of judgment? That God who we have been so often told would call us to an account, and reckon with us for what we have said and done—where is He? He has forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of what is said and done there; He has said that He will come to judgment; but where is the promise of His coming? We may do what we please, He sees us not, nor will regard us." It is such a challenge to the Judge of the whole earth as bids defiance to His justice, and in effect dares Him to do His worst. Such scoffers as these there were in the latter days of the Jewish Church, and such there shall be in the latter days of the Christian Church; but their unbelief shall not make the promise of God of no effect, for the day of the Lord will come. Behold, the Judge stands before the door; the God of judgment is at hand. 11.

The scepticism indicated by the questions Malachi puts into the people's mouth is as old as time, and as new as to-day. It is common to all ages and to every heart. The prosperity of the wicked and the delay of Providence are roots out of which doubt forever springs afresh. In our turn we all ask, "If there be a God, and He is just and good, why does He permit good to be overcome of evil?" *Cor.*

## MALACHI, CHAPTERS III., IV.

- 3:1 BEHOLD, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver: and they shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers; and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I the Lord change not: therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.
- 7 From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse: for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room

11 enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, 12 said the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein have we 14 spoken against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we 15 have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they 16 tempt God, and are delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, 17 for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do make, *even* a peculiar treasure; and I will spare 18 them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him 19: 1 not. For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith 2 the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go 3 forth, and gambol as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do make, saith the Lord of hosts.

4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for 5 all Israel, even statutes and judgements. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before 6 the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

**Chap. 3.** The coming of John Baptist and of Jesus the Messiah is foretold with some of the results (verses 1-5); then exhortations to repentance and rebukes for sin, especially the sin of robbing the Lord of His titles and offerings (verses 6-12). The spirit of the wicked is contrasted with the spirit of the righteous (verses 13-18).

1. The most ample proof is found in the New Testament that "My messenger" is John Baptist. Our Lord bore witness to John (Luke 7: 27): "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare the way before Thee." His father, Zacharias, when filled with the Holy Ghost, said, "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways," etc. (Luke 1: 76). Consequently, "the Lord whom ye seek," "the Messenger of the Covenant," can be no other than Jesus the Messiah. But why is He called "the Messenger of the Covenant"? "Messenger" means angel. It is the word usually translated angel. Jesus is the Angel of the Covenant in the twofold sense: (1) Of being the same personage so often called in the Old Testament an "angel"—*e.g.*, Ex. 23: 20-23, which if the reader will examine, he will see refers to the uncreated angel who pardons sin, in whom is the name of Jehovah, and who is a perpetual Presence with His Church

under both the old dispensation and the new; called "the Angel of the Covenant" also, because so long promised by covenant with the patriarchs and saints of old; and (2) of being especially "the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 9: 15); and of "the better covenant, established upon better promises" (Heb. 8: 6-13). The person who speaks in this verse is "Jehovah of Hosts." Yet He says, "I will send one who shall prepare the way before Me." The testimony of inspiration thus makes the promised Messiah no other than "Jehovah of Hosts." This name is given Him by Divine authority. II. C.

Old Testament passages that speak of a certain being as the "Angel of Jehovah" occur in many different books, and in connection with different periods in the history. Those which belong to the times of the Exodus are Ex. 3: 2; 14: 19; 23: 20, 23; 32: 34; 33: 2; Num. 20: 16; 22: 22 *seq.* This same angel of Jehovah is very prominent in the thought of the post exilian prophets (Hag. 1: 13; Zech. 1: 11, 12; 3: 1, 5, 6, etc.). In their thought, there are strong analogies between their times and the times of the Exodus, and the Angel that led their fathers into the promised land is leading them. Malachi here quotes, compositely, from the two clauses: "Behold, I send an angel" (Ex. 23: 20), and "My Angel shall go" (Ex. 23: 23). *The Messenger of the Covenant:*

better, "the Angel of the Covenant," the Angel whom Jehovah in the time of the Exodus covenanted to send before His people. By the only unforced understanding of the matter, "My angel," "the Lord," and "the Angel of the Covenant" are one and the same person. The prophet represents that Jehovah is speaking to these post exilian people, saying, for substance: When your fathers came out of Egypt, I promised to be with them in the person of My Angel. Later, one of My prophets proclaimed that the way should be prepared before Me. You profess that you are seeking Me as your lord. You profess that you would be delighted with the presence of the covenant Angel. And yet you ask, Where is the God of judgment? You pretend to think that I am pleased with the evil, as well as with the good. In view of this, I announce that I keep My word. I send My Angel. The way shall be prepared for My coming. Suddenly you shall be aware that your lord the Angel is in the temple. And what then? W. J. B.

That "Angel" had redeemed Israel from Egypt, had led them through the desert, had been the "Captain of the Lord's host." The name of Jehovah was "in Him." He it is whose coming is here prophesied, and in His coming Jehovah comes to His temple. A. M.—He who should come was *the Lord*, again Almighty God, since, in usage, too, none else is called "*the Lord*" (Ex. 23: 17; 34: 23; Isa. 1: 24; 3: 1; 10: 16, 33; 29: 4) as none else can be. The temple also, to which He was to come, the temple of God, is His own. *The Messenger and the Angel of the Covenant*, plainly, even from the parallelism, is the same as *the Lord*. *Pusey*.—All Christian interpreters are agreed that this Lord is Christ, *whom God hath made both Lord and Christ, and who is Lord over all* (Acts 2: 36; 10: 36); by whom all things were made, are sustained and governed; who is, as the root of the word imports, the basis and foundation not of any private family, tribe or kingdom, but of all; by whom are all things and are by Him; and whose we are also by right of redemption; and so He is *Lord of lords and King of kings*, deservedly called the Lord. *Poore*.

It is not possible to find any other person to whom the words of this prophecy will apply. From Malachi, to the destruction of the temple, no one can be named, except the Lord Jesus, who is able to make any pretension to the express characters in this prediction. Mark therefore had good reason to introduce his Gospel with this unexceptionable text of Malachi, in

order to show the connection between the Old and New Testament, and that one began where the other ended. There was no Jew at that time who did not agree to the application of this prophecy to the Messiah, according to the letter. No Christian since hath been so wild as to fancy any other sense of it. Even the learned Grotius, so willing and so capable, as he appears to be at other times, to invent double meanings, yields up this prophecy to Christ, as concerning Him only, and no other person. *Bp. Chandler*.

The first words of this chapter seem a direct answer to the profane, atheistical demand of the scoffers of those days, which closed the foregoing chapter: Where is the God of judgment? To which it is readily answered, "Here he is; He is just at the door; the long-expected Messiah is ready to appear; and He says, For judgment am I come into this world; for that judgment which you so impudently bid defiance to." One of the rabbins says, that the meaning of this is that God will raise up a righteous King, to set things in order, even the King Messiah. And the beginning of the Gospel of Christ is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise, with which the Old Testament concludes (Mark 1: 1, 2). So that by this the two Testaments are, as it were, tacked together, and made to answer one another. II.

2. *Who may abide: Jehovah, in the person of His Angel, they had been taught, was to do great things for His people, and especially for the obedient among them; but He was also to be a severe judge* (Ex. 23: 21, 22; 32: 34). Whether His coming would be a joy to any among them would depend on whether they were prepared for it, so that they would receive Him trustingly and obediently. *Fuller's*: A fuller, in Bible language, is not a workman who thickens the cloth after it has been woven, but a laundryman—one who washes garments or cloths, to cleanse them. Incidentally, bleaching is thought of as part of the cleansing process. There is an implication here that whoever bears the character of base metal may well dread the fire, and whoever bears the character of foulness may well dread the processes by which the fine linen is made clean. W. J. B.

3. "Who shall be able to bear the day of His coming?"—the searching ordeal of such moral scrutiny? Not those corrupt priests, so recently before the prophet's mind. Ah! full soon will He scourge them out of His temple, and hurl them down from the high position which they so shamefully desecrate! "Who

shall stand when He appeareth?" Some few—those who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem"—will hail His coming as "the horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David;" but the sensual, the worldly, the formal—however carefully they may have covered up their iniquity with the cloak of sanctimonious profession, will be put through such processes of refining and proving as shall surely reveal their dross—"for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap"—physical agents which well illustrate the work of the coming Messiah in purifying His Church. The state of the Church and its leading men at that time strongly suggested the need of this purifying work to be done by "the Messenger of the Covenant." H. C.

The process alluded to by Malachi in this passage, and further described by Ezekiel (Ezek. 22: 20-22), is very like what is called cupelling in modern metallurgy. The vessel containing the alloy is placed in the midst of the fire, and the blast is applied to the metals, not to the fire. When this is done, nothing but the precious metals, gold and silver, remain. Jeremiah also illustrates this method (Jer. 6: 29, 30). The silver there is mixed with iron, copper and tin. Lead is put with it on the fire. It soon melts. The lead comes to the top, forms a crust, and thus consumes away, but does not purify. But why? Because, as the prophet says, "the bellows are burned." There was nothing to send a blast upon the molten metal, and it remains reprobate "silver." When the refiner has the blast properly directed on to the contents of the earthen vessel, he sits and watches it carefully. When the mass has become thoroughly molten, the surface has a deep orange-red color, with a kind of flickering wave constantly passing over it. As the heat is increased, the color of the fused metal becomes lighter. The refiner sits watching until all the orange color and shading have disappeared, and the metal assumes the appearance of a highly polished mirror, reflecting everything around. When the refiner can see himself perfectly reflected, as in a looking glass, he knows that the metal is pure. If he is not satisfied after he has removed it from the furnace, he adds more lead, and repeats the process. So does Jehovah try and sift His people till they have been perfected in the furnace of affliction. *Tristram.*

The images of the refiner's fire and the fuller's soap imply painful processes, of which the intention is to burn out the dross and beat out the filth. It sounds like a prolongation of

Malachi's voice when John the Baptist peals out his herald cry of one whose "fan was in His hand," and who should plunge men into a fiery baptism, and consume with fire that destroyed what would not submit to be cast into the fire that cleansed. Nor should we forget that our Lord has said, "For judgment am I come into the world." He came to "purify;" but if men would not let Him do what He came for, He could not but be their bane instead of their blessing. *Judgment is the shadow of salvation*, and constantly attends on it. Neither Malachi nor the Baptist gives a complete view of Messiah's work, but still less do they give an erroneous one; for the central portion of both prophecies is His purifying energy, which both liken to cleansing fire. That real and inward cleansing is the great work of Christ. It was wrought on as many of His contemporaries as believed on Him, and for such as did not He was a swift witness against them. Nor are we to forget that the prophecy is not exhausted yet; for there remains another "day of His coming" for judgment. A. M.

Many processes He has, the great Spiritual Refiner, who sits in the midst of His Church, to make like to Himself, and thus more capable of reflecting His image those on whom He has set His heart, and at whose hands He would fain accept an offering not mean nor poor. Having appointed to them a kingdom, He appoints to them, first of all, to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism. What way is there for any one of us but only this? It was well said long ago, "The way to heaven is by Weeping Cross;" and all true pilgrims shall find it so. *Trench.*

Trials are among the most signal waymarks in the pilgrimage of faith, trials at the beginning, trials in the continuance, trials at the end. Yet not trials always, nor trials unmingled, but enough constantly, or at intervals, to prove thee and show thee what is in thy heart, and to lead that heart for healing and rest to God. The history of faith, and of God's discipline for its increase and perfection, ever has been and ever will be a record of trials. Character is read and known in the temper of the soul sustaining them, and they themselves are the costly instruments of God in refining and establishing the soul. We are in the shop of the Great Jeweller, preparing for our places in His palace above; and they whom He means to make the most resplendent, said Leighton in this beautiful figure, He hath oftenest His tools upon. Until this discipline of God have been applied to him, a man knows not of what ele-



ments his nature is composed, nor what hidden evils may be festering in his bosom. God must bring them out, and redeem him from them, or he can never be prepared for the kingdom of heaven. G. B. C.

The word "character," in its origin, is suggestive. It is from a word which signifies to engrave, to cut into furrows. Thus it means that which is engraved or cut on anything. In life, therefore, it is that which is distinctive in any individual. Or, to put it in a more practical way, it is that which experiences cut or furrow into the life. A baby has no character. Its life is like a piece of white paper, with nothing yet written upon it; or it is like a smooth marble tablet, on which the sculptor as yet has cut nothing. Character is formed as the years go on. It is the writing, the song, the story, put upon the paper. It is the engraving, the sculpturing, which the marble receives under the chisel. Final character is what a man is when he has lived his earthly years. In the Christian it is the lines of the likeness of Christ furrowed and scarred upon his soul by the Divine Spirit, through the means of grace and the experiences of his own life. J. R. M.

By secret trials, chastenings, which none but they and God can understand, the Lord is cleansing them from their secret faults and making them understand wisdom secretly; burning out of them the chaff of self-will, and self-conceit, and self-vanity, and leaving only the pure gold of righteousness. How many sweet and holy souls, who look cheerful enough before the eyes of men, yet have their secret sorrows! They carry their cross unseen all day long, and lie down to sleep on it at night; and they will carry it, perhaps, for years and years, and to their graves and to the throne of Christ, before they lay it down, and none but they and Christ will ever know what it was—what was the secret chastisement which God sent to make the soul better which seemed to us already too good for earth. So does the Lord watch His people, and tries them by fire, as the refiner of silver sits by his furnace watching the melting metal, till he knows it is purged from all its dross by seeing the image of his own face reflected on it. *Charles Kingsley.*

There is not one stroke of superfluous agony. Every pulse of anguish is felt by God, as the refiner and purifier of silver watches the furnace, sure to lift the molten metal out, or to cool the fire, when the needed change is wrought. The instant faith's deep discipline is accomplished, Christ stays His hand. F. D. H.

Affliction may be the fire, but Christ is the Refiner. Whatever instrument may cause the nerves to agonize and the heart to grieve, the Lord Himself holds it. The tool may be malignity, but the worker is love. We may be in the hand of our enemy, but the enemy himself is in the hand of God. That which aims to destroy is used as the unconscious medium of serving the purpose of that which designs to bless. He is *present* all through the operation of the trial. As much as the act of refining silver implies the presence of the refiner, the affliction of a Christian implies the presence of Christ. The process could not be carried on without Him. By the side of His afflicted disciple, He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. There He is, "a very present help in time of trouble." *Very* present; closer than close, nearer than near; making him who is sorely tried a wonder to himself and a wonder to me. When he comes into the light of the living again, he will look back upon this day's experience with surprise, and say, "I never could have lived through it if Christ had not been with me." There he is, to comfort with assurances of Divine sympathy. No visible friend, however loving, who sits by that poor man, holding his hot hand, or fanning his fevered brow, can even faintly understand the gentle tenderness of the unseen Saviour's heart, for it is infinite. . . . Powers of great usefulness can be educated in no other way. Powers of endurance are unknown where there has been nothing to endure. Powers of rule belong alone to those who have learned to rule by learning to obey. The power of teaching is the special faculty of men who have themselves undergone stern discipline. The power of sympathy is educated in the school of sorrow. Leaders whose souls have never been crucified, and whose plans have never had a failure, are apt to be at best pitiless exactors of righteousness, mere engines for doing duty; iron men, who never melt into compassion; rough men, who knock down weakness, and to whom the fine offices of consolation are all mysteries. No words can express how much the world owes to sorrow. *C. Stanford.*

We enter a world of antagonism and opposition the moment we resolve at Christ's feet to be Christians, to be true men, to obey God, to forsake sin, to do our duty. There never comes a time when we can live nobly without effort, without resistance to wrong influences, without struggle against the power of temptation. It never gets easy to be good. We are apt to grow weary of this continued struggle, and to

become discouraged that it never ends. But out of this very struggle we get the nobleness and beauty of character after which we are striving. One of the Scotch martyrs had on his crest the motto *Sub pondere cresco*—"I grow under a weight." On the crest was a palm-tree, with weights depending from its fronds. In spite of the weights, the tree grew straight as an arrow, lifting its crown of graceful foliage high up in the serene air. It is well known that the palm grows best loaded down with weights. Thus this martyr testified that he, like this beautiful tree of the Orient, grew best in his spiritual life under weights. This is the universal law of spiritual growth. There must be resistance, struggle, conflict, or there can be no development of strength. Men pity those whose lives are scenes of toil and endurance, but God's angels do not look upon such with pity if only they are victorious; for they are thus climbing daily upward, toward the holy heights of sainthood. The beatitudes in the apocalypse are for those who overcome. Spiritual life needs opposition. It flourishes most luxuriantly in adverse circumstances. We grow best under weights. J. R. M.

4. "Ancient years." The prophet has in mind pre-exilic times, long gone by, when the temple worship was in its glory. It will be so again, he says, when the winnowed temple ministers become pure in heart and correct in practice.

5, 6. The severe purifying processes will be applied to the people as well as to the priestly classes, and especially to those who are personally guilty of the wrongs for which God rebukes the nation. *I will come*: It is Jehovah, in the person of His Angel, that will come to judgment. Doubtless the prophet has in mind the same wrongdoers whom he condemns in 2: 11-16, the same who are described in Ezra and Nehemiah as forming illegal unions with foreign women. It is noticeable that Malachi condemns these unions on the ground of their involving treachery to legal wives to whom these men had been previously married, and on the ground of their leading to divorces. He says that Jehovah hates divorcing (2: 16). Put these facts along with the fact that Ezra and Nehemiah, in describing the cases of these foreign women, never use the terms that properly signify either marriage or divorce, and it may lead to the conclusion that the conduct of these leaders was more humane than many have supposed. *False swearers*: It should be "the false swearers," those who had sworn (Neh. 10: 28 *seq.*) to keep Jehovah's laws and abstain

from foreign alliances, and see that the temple revenues were maintained, and who had failed to keep their oath. Along with these, Malachi, like most of the pre-exilic prophets, rebukes sorcerers, and those who, in various ways, oppress the weak. W. J. B.

6. The connection of thought here turns on the special significance of the name *Jehovah*—the ever-faithful and unchanging One—the God of the promises, who hath said and will surely fulfil. If He had not made such promises of enduring protection and mercy to the ancient covenant people, He would even now cut them off at once. It is only because He is Jehovah that His faithfulness spares "the sons of Jacob." There is a power in that name, "sons of Jacob," that avails to save them yet, on the score of those never-failing promises. H. C.

God, and all that is in God, is unchangeable. His *mercy* is unchangeable, it "endureth forever." So His *strength*, He is called the Rock of Ages. So also His *counsel*, He may change His sentence, the outward threatening or promise, but not His inward decree. So also His *love* is immutable; His heart is the same to His people in all the diversity of their outward condition. We may change in circumstances or in opinions, but God does not change. T. Manton.

All our changes arise from the imperfection of our nature. We lose what we have, because of our feebleness; and we receive accessions, because we have not sufficiency in ourselves. Defect, limitation and dependence characterize our nature, and hence we change; fulness, infinitude and all-sufficiency characterize the Deity, and hence, during the flow of ages, he remains the same. Wm. Cooke.

Every promise which He has made is guaranteed, as well by His natural attributes of wisdom, power and sufficiency, as by His perfect moral rectitude. In this His character of truth, the everlasting foundations of His religion are laid. That changes not, because the doctrines taught in it are in themselves true without error, and can never be displaced by new and better discoveries; it fails not, because every gracious promise must by Him be accomplished; and thus the religion of the Bible continues from age to age, and from day to day, as much a matter of personal experience as it ever was. In its doctrines, it can never become an antiquated theory; for truth is eternal. In its practical application, it can never become foreign to man; for it enters now and must ever enter into his concerns, his duties, his hopes and comforts, to the end of

time. We know what is true as an object of belief, because the God of truth has declared it; and we know what is faithful, and, therefore, the object of unlimited trust, because "He is faithful that hath promised." *R. Watson.*

The different frames and feelings which distress us do not affect God nor cause any change in His love to us. A changeable God must be an unhappy being like ourselves; but God never changes in His love, purposes and grace to us. He did not love us, choose us and set His heart upon us on account of what He saw in us, but as He viewed us in the Son of His love. We are unrighteous sinners in ourselves; but He sees in Christ an everlasting atonement for our sins, an everlasting righteousness to justify us: therefore He is ever pleased with us in Christ; ever of one mind concerning us; ever rests in His love to us and joys over us: no change in us can ever affect His mind, His love or His joy. *W. Mason.*

It is a source of great comfort and strength amid the changes of human life to know that there is One who changes not. The unchangeableness of God gives a solid basis upon which our thought and hope may rest, and enables us to believe that all the vicissitudes of our life are held within the scope of a never-failing Divine purpose. The changelessness of God is not like that which is found in the uniformity of nature, but is the changelessness of personal character—changelessness in the fundamental principles of action and attributes of character, with the utmost play of variety and change of activity within the limits involved in an immutable moral nature. It is the same changeless love which manifests disapproval and condemnation of sin as manifests approval of goodness. The desire and effort on the part of God to promote the highest good of His creatures as truly require that He should disapprove and condemn sin as that He should approve holiness. God's love, then, in its essential character, is changeless. It is and ever remains the desire and effort to bless, save, and bring to its true life of godlikeness every soul of man. But the mode in which it shall act and the course which it shall pursue, in dealing with individual men, must vary according to the character and attitude of each man toward the love which is seeking his highest welfare. . . .

While the love of God is changeless in its tenderness and yearning to bless, it is also changelessly holy and unable to approve or overlook sin. God will ever seek our truest welfare, but He could never promote our truest welfare

if He did not condemn our sins. He is changeless in His glorious and holy perfections; but within these perfections themselves there is all the variety and play of passion, feeling and action, which belong to a living, moral personality perpetually exerting His infinite energies in acts of wisdom, power and grace. *G. B. Stevens.*

This sublime idea of the one, absolute, independent, perfect God which fills the pages of the Old Testament, from the first phrase of Genesis to the last of Malachi, which is asserted with authority in the Law, whose breath inspires the prophets, in presence of which psalmists adore and Hebrew sages meditate; this idea which the Son of God has accepted, hailed, confirmed, and which He has transmitted to His Church, making of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at once our God and our Father; this idea which becomes the sentence of death of the nations which reject it, the powerful support of all those that adopt and preserve it; whence did the Israelites derive it? It is their only intellectual treasure, since they had no other grandeur, no other mission in the history of the world than to be its bearers; and it is their own peculiar treasure, for no other nation has shared it with them. We must accept the word which is claimed by the very facts themselves; we must admit that there has been revelation. *F. Goulet.*

To the moral education and development of our race, a vivid conception of God's active presence, and conscious, intelligent interest in human affairs is indispensable. It was such a conception which made the Hebrews a peculiar people—nay, in spite of their conspicuous faults, a great people. Their invincible vitality, their distinctive, unconquerable homogeneity, against which so many tyrant persecutors have hurled themselves in vain, would have been melted away in the course of any two of the last twenty-five centuries, had theirs been a pantheistic conception of God. Their survival as a people, though long divested of a country, and even of a chief, is a striking proof of the conservative force that inheres in the idea of a God to whom those who will may draw practically, consciously nearer than are those who know Him not; though these, too, are subjects of His care. The bloodless speculation which vaunts itself philosophy and enlightenment has rarefied the other wherein it works, until "the undevout astronomer" alone can tell what it believes or aims to teach with regard to our theme. But, whatever else may be affirmed or denied thereof, it can hardly be

doubted that the general drift of this speculation is toward a weakened sense of moral responsibility. It inspires no such horror of sin or dread of divinely decreed and administered retribution as do the canons of ancient faith. "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the children of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," becomes absurd self-sacrifice in the contemplation of a philosophy which precludes all retribution which is not the necessary consequence of violating beneficent laws—in whose regard punishment is but another phase of gravitation. In such a philosophy, self-denial finds no alimant, conscience no spur, and the love and practice of virtue no safeguard in that "fearful looking for of judgment" which pursues and overtakes the transgressor. *Horace Greeley.*

**7-12.** In the first chapter, Malachi had scathingly rebuked the temple ministers because they did not stand by their duties, even at the cost of hardships, when the people failed to bring in the tithes and offerings. Now he pays his respects to the people who have been guilty of this failure. God counts as robbery our failure to contribute our proper proportion to the support of religious ordinances. *With a curse:* The Revised Version has, correctly, "the curse." Probably the curse referred to in the first verses of chap. 2—that is, the curse described in De. 28. In the second chapter, Malachi applies the Deuteronomy passage to the priests; now he applies it to "this whole nation." Their way to escape the curse is to be obedient, and the specific obedience now required is that which consists in bringing in all their religious dues. *W. J. B.*

The key-word of the Christian life is "sacrifice"—surrender, and that to God. That is to be stamped on the inmost selves, and, by the act of the will, on the body as well. "Yield yourselves to God, and your members as instruments of righteousness to Him." It is to be written on possessions. Malachi necessarily keeps within the limits of the sacrificial system, but his impetuous eloquence hits us no less. It is still possible to "rob God." We do so when we keep anything as our own, and use it at our own will, for our own purposes. Only when we recognize His ownership of ourselves, and consequently of all that we call "ours," do we give Him His due. Such thoroughgoing surrender is the secret of thorough possession. The true way to enjoy worldly goods is to give them to God. The lattices of heaven are opened, not to pour down, as of old, fiery destruction, but to make way for the

gentle descent of God's blessing, which will more than fill every vessel set to receive it. This is the universal law, not always fulfilled in increase of outward goods, but in the better riches of communion and of larger possession in God Himself. He suffers no man to be His creditor, but more than returns our gifts—as legends tell of some peasant who brought his king a poor tribute of fruits of his fields, and went away from the presence-chamber with a jewel in his hand. *A. M.*

*Return unto Me, and I will return unto you* (verse 7). Although God does not change, man does. And when man changes his attitude toward God, it makes it seem as though God had changed His attitude toward man. If man looks toward God, he sees the loving face of God; but if man turns his back on God, he misses that loving face, and then he is inclined to think that God has become his enemy. There is only one cure for such a trouble as this, and that is for the changeful man to turn back again to the unchanging God. If man and God seem to be in opposition, the fault is wholly man's. Man has turned away from God, and brought about this seeming opposition between the two. If man will simply turn back again, the old loving relations will be re-established. *H. C. T.*

**7, 8.** *This is why* God judges, but does not destroy: He purges out the wicked, and refines the good from their dross, in order that, in His unchanging compassion, He may carry out His purpose of redemption and grace. Thus "the covenant is equipped at all points and sure;" for if the unfaithfulness of man cannot annul it, what can? And that man's unfaithfulness cannot annul it is evident; for "from the days of your fathers ye have departed from My statutes, and have not kept them."

*This, too,* is why God has delayed His coming. It is not that He is slack concerning His promises, but that they will not fulfil the conditions of the promise. Generation after generation they have shown themselves to be a disobedient and gainsaying people. How can He come to them, while they still depart from Him? How can He come, bringing salvation, while they do not keep His statutes? The blessing of the obedient cannot be given to the disobedient. Let them return to Him from whom they have departed, and then see whether He will keep them waiting for Him.

But "wherein shall we return?" they object. In what have we departed from Him, that we should retrace our steps? Are not we the chosen race, the holy nation? "Dare a

man defraud God?" replies Jehovah. "Yet ye have defrauded Me." "We!" respond the people; "we defraud Thee! Pray, how?" "Ye have defrauded me," answers Jehovah, "even in that in which ye pride yourselves as being most exact, in the least things; how much more, then, in the greatest? Even the tithes and offerings have not been duly paid, although your neglect has been rebuked by a curse, the curse of famine." *Chr.*

**10.** This striking passage has the richer interest to Christians because, under the principles of the ancient economy—viz., temporal blessings to the faithfully obedient—it presents to us the great law of His spiritual administration as well, showing that there can really be no limit (short of our utmost capacity) to the spiritual blessings God will give those who, really hungering for righteousness, "open wide their mouth that God may fill it," and hence who honestly use all appropriate means for this result. God is forever the same, and certainly is no less bountiful of blessings under the Christian than under the Jewish economy. "Prove Me;" put My words to the test. *H. C.*

Malachi has told us how the people brought blind and lame and sick—nay, even stolen, beasts for sacrifice; how they offered ewes on pretence that they had no rams in their flocks, and vowed their choicest oxen and sheep, and then, when the moment of pressure was past, brought "that which was corrupt;" how the priests offered "polluted bread" and "unclean sacrifices," and cried, as they discharged their function, "What a weariness it is!" Now even the Hebrews knew that "to obey is better than to sacrifice;" but they also knew that to sacrifice *was* to obey; and so often as they neglected the lesser obedience of sacrifice, they still more neglected the larger obedience of moral conformity to the Divine Will. In His mercy God only puts them to the lesser test. For the present it shall be enough if they bring "all the tithe" into the store-chambers of the temple. Let them but do that, and He will open the sluice-gates of heaven, and pour down on them the blessing of copious rain; He will rebuke the devouring locust; the fruit of the earth shall no longer be destroyed before it can be gathered in, nor shall the vine miscarry of its grapes. So happy shall be their condition, so fertile their land, that all nations shall call them blessed. Thus the Lord whom they seek will come to them so soon as they are ready for Him, so soon as He can come in benediction. He will come, not only in His temple,

but also in their barns and homesteads and fields. *Chr.*

We are not only to worship God with our lips and give Him praise with our tongue, but He has required that we should worship Him with our substance. Our services add nothing to God, therefore it is our good which He seeks in all His institutions of religion. It is our good, our greatest good, that our whole trust should be in the Lord, always and upon all occasions; because He cannot fail us, and everything else will, and, therefore, we must be miserable if we place our trust in anything else than God, and our greatest happiness must consist in a full and absolute dependence upon Him. Now this trust and dependence is produced more by our deeds than our words; more by practising of it than by speaking of it and praising it; and the payment of our tithe is a practise of it, a trusting in God that He will not only accept it and give us spiritual blessings of it, but even that we shall gain by it, as to this world, and prove the richer for it. For it is His blessing only that giveth increase, as to the fruits of the field, so to the labors of our hands, to all our endeavors in whatever vocation. The Lord bids us prove Him herein, try Him, trust in Him, and see how abundant He will be in His blessings to us, and whether He will not return to us tenfold for the tenth we give to Him. But if we dare not trust God so far as to make this small experiment when He provokes us to it, and grudge to give Him the tenth, who gave us all, it is but just with Him to take that from us wherein we trusted, and not to leave us a tenth; but to take the whole from those who durst not trust Him and His promises with a tenth. *C. Leslie, 1700.*

While men are allowed to handle and manage to a certain limit what they are also permitted in a kind of figure to call their property as a part of the discipline of their moral liberty—to try and prove them what manner of men they are—they are also continually to be opening their hands and parting with this substance, putting it clean away from them, cost what it will, laying it on altars, burning it in the fire, beating it small, scattering it as incense on the air, making it the maintenance of the Lord's priesthood, sending it away in the wilderness. *Bp. Huntington.*

Self has got hold of the purse-strings, and the Lord is likely to be robbed of His dues. That is the real secret of diminished contributions in our churches, and that accounts for the fact while God's Church is growing richer at a rapid rate, so many grand institutions for

the spread of His kingdom are often at starvation point. "The lust of the eye and the pride of life" steal in, and under smooth pretences commit their shameful larcenies of the moneys which God loans to His stewards. When Christians undertake to cheat God, their sin is sure sooner or later to find them out. *T. L. Cuyler.*

*God's claim upon our money gains.* In every province of human life God requires His proprietorship to be recognized. The seventh part of our time is hallowed for His service. The firstfruits of corn were to be devoted to religious uses. The firstborn in the household belonged to God, and was to be redeemed by substitution. And now, of all their yearly gains, one tenth was claimed by God. His claim proceeds from His proprietorship. Toward the Hebrews He was obviously and directly landlord. He had put them into possession of their estates, and rightfully could exact from them a rent. And with respect to all national substance, God is absolute Proprietor. He has an original and indefeasible right as Creator; and it is His supreme power that maintains in existence the treasures of the earth. Even the power we have to accumulate wealth is derived from the same beneficent Source. It is His *gift*, not that He has conveyed to us the irresponsible right in it, but simply in the sense that we had nothing with which to purchase it. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." *D. D.*

God has made the outpouring of spiritual blessing dependent upon man's faithfulness in observing the law of tithes and firstfruits and religious tributes of all kinds: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." We may keep back part of the consecrated price, but the loss will be ours rather than God's. We may account ourselves even clever in making calculations as to how much we can save from the cost of piety and charity, but the great law of compensation will proceed disastrously in our case because of this calculated and irreligious penny: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." This law of compensation operates also in the other direction with noble impartiality: "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." We imagine that all God's benefactions are spiritual; we have shut Him out from the field and the vineyard; but hear His word: "The Lord shall command

the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and He shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." But we must not attempt to make an investment of our charity. *J. P.*

We pray for the coming of the kingdom of Christ, and wonder, at times, that our heartless, disunited, inconsistent prayers are not more successful. But what do we expect? Let it be supposed that a convocation of all the Christians upon earth should be held, to implore the conversion of the world. How justly might an ancient prophet be sent from God to rebuke them, and say: "The means for the conversion of the world are already in your hands. Had you been dependent on human charity for support, you might have then expected to see your Almighty Lord erect His kingdom by miracle, or you might have warrantably come to His throne to implore the means necessary for carrying it on by your own instrumentality. But these means are actually in your hands. You are asking Him to do that, the very means for doing which are at this moment locked up in your coffers, or wasted in costly self-gratification. For what purpose has He placed so much wealth in your hands? Surely not to consume it in self-indulgence. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house to lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways." Look abroad over your assembled myriads; calculate the immense resources of wealth placed at your disposal; imagine that you were to be seized with a noble generosity, like that which at different times descended on the ancient people of God, and then say, what enterprise would be too vast for your means? Make this consecration of your substance to the cause of Christ, and then come and ask for the conversion of the world. Till then, ask only, and in common consistency expect only, that He will bless you to the amount of your sacrifices for His cause. *J. Harris.*

Modern missions are maintained neither by the zeal of the few nor by the mere zeal of the many, but rather by the deep-seated impulsive power of a grave and irresistible conviction, pressing on the conscience even of the inert and the selfish; and much more on the hearts of the fervent and devoted. That a Christian has no more liberty to withhold his aid and service from these evangelizing associations than he has to abandon the duties of common life, and that for a man to profess hope in Christ and to deny what he might

spare to promote the diffusion of the Gospel, is the most egregious of all practical solecisms. *I. Taylor.*

We have not penetrated to the centre of true Christian activity, we have not risen to the height of the apostolic view of duty to Christ and to the world, until we give because we are *indebted* to men whose faces we have never seen ; to whom the world accounts us not under the slightest obligation ; to whom we are indebted simply because the God who made both them and us has distinguished us from them in order that we might bless them, as we may, with the powers and the knowledge which He has given to us ! R. S. S.

It is the "multitude praying without"—be they few or many, known or unknown—who are the builders of your churches, the senders of your missionaries, the really efficient patrons of your orphan houses, hospitals and Christian education societies. The finest and firmest machinery in the world is so much dead material without these prayers. I suppose most of you have seen some elaborate and costly specimen of mechanism standing still : every little screw and bolt of the complicated system in its place ; every post and bar, flange and transom secure ; every bright lever and arm, wheel and tooth, tempered and tested—the whole a splendid embodiment and trophy of intellectual ingenuity and determination, yet silent and inert as icicles, till some lifted gate or opened valve lets in the mysterious *notice power* which makes it a sure and mighty servant of a purpose beyond it. So are all our best religious measures, till the breath of the Church's prayers joins them to the Spirit from on high. Throughout all its portions the Scripture has no other doctrine. "Be strong, all ye people of the Lord, for I am with you, saith the Lord." "Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit." "Prove Me if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing." F. D. H.

**11, 12.** These verses still expand the promise commenced in verse 10. If you will truly bring in all the tithes and meet all your obligations to God, then I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes—the locust, put here for all forms of destructive agents. All the nations shall witness to your prosperity. H. C.

**13-15** contain a rebuke of persons who were impatient under temporal trials, and murmured against God, because they did not at once reap the fruit of their service in temporal prosperity. B. C.

The antithesis between what God had said

before (verses 10-12), and what these wicked gainsayers reply (verses 14, 15), is much more apparent in the original, especially of verse 15, than in the received translation. First, the pronoun "*we*," being expressed in full, is slightly emphatic : you say one thing ; *we*, on our part, not admitting what you say, are stoutly maintaining the opposite. Then the verb, "call you *blessed*" (in verse 12), and the corresponding verb, "call the proud *happy*" (verse 15), are precisely the same ; as if they would say, You claim that the nations shall call God's obedient people *blessed* ; we, for our part, call the proud *blessed*. So the word rendered "*prove*" (verse 10) is the same as is here (verse 15) rendered "tempt." You have said, Let My people *prove* Me. We have to say in reply, that the wicked *have proved Thee* by scoffing at Thy words ; and yet so far from being punished, they are even delivered from all fear and danger. H. C.

**16, 17.** In the third act of this dramatic dialogue (chap. 3 : 13-4 : 3), in which the prophet is the mouthpiece alternately of Jehovah and of the people, we once more hear the sceptical murmurs of distrust. First comes the charge : "Your words do Me wrong, saith Jehovah." Then follows the "but," the objection : "And ye say, What do we speak against Thee ?" And then comes the rejoinder, which gives us a sample of the common talk of the day. Wherever men met for converse they might be heard saying, some, "It is vain to serve God !" others, "What profit is it that we keep His ordinances, and go about with sad faces and in mourning weeds as those who lament the national sin ?" some, "We see that the proud are blessed rather than the humble !" others, "The wicked flourish rather than the just !" and still others, "Those who tempt God by their presumption and impiety are nevertheless delivered from peril rather than the meek and the devout !" In short, the general sentiment of the time was that the very blessings promised to the meek, the humble, the sorrowful, were bestowed on the heedless, the proud, the self-confident ; and the general mistake of the time was that because they, the Jews, fasted and observed certain outward forms, and these not always the forms ordained by Jehovah, they therefore possessed that piety which He had promised to bless and reward.

Now just as in chap. 2 : 5-7, Jehovah had rebuked the false and corrupt priests by placing before them a charming picture of the true priest, the ideal Levi, so here He rebukes the foolish and profane talk of the multitude by

contrasting with it the conversation of the faithful remnant, the little community of saints, who feared Him and thought on His Name. Unhappily, however, *their* talk is not reported, at least by Malachi, though, as we have seen, that of the ungodly is. All we are told of it is, that it was full of the fear of Jehovah, and that it was held to be of such value in heaven that, just as the Persian monarch kept a book in which the heroic deeds of any of his servants were recorded, so the King of Heaven "hearkened and heard" when His servants spoke well of Him in evil times, and had *their* names written in a book of remembrance. When we read,

"Then they that feared Jehovah spake often one with another

And Jehovah hearkened and heard,

And a book of remembrance was kept before Him

For those that feared Jehovah,

And that thought on His Name,"

we are not only charmed with the stately music of the lines; we long that we could stand in that happy company of saints, if only for a few moments, and hear what they had to say to each other, and learn what it was that drew them so often and so close together. Is it altogether impossible to recover the words which Malachi has failed to report? It is by no means impossible. Our wish may be fulfilled. We *may* hear of what they that feared the Lord spake one to another; we may give, on the best authority, some of the very words they used. While the nominal Israel said, "It is vain to serve God," the true, the elect Israel said, "Happy is every one that feareth Jehovah, that walketh in His ways." While the former said, "What profit is it that we serve Him?" the latter said, "They that put their trust in Jehovah are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but standeth fast forever." While the degenerate majority said, "The proud are blessed, the wicked flourish, the boldly bad are saved from all peril!" the pious few said, "Though the ploughers plough our back, and draw long furrows, God will cut in sunder the traces of the wicked; though the proud are green and flourishing for a time, they are but as the grass on the village roofs wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom" (Ps. 135); "though we go forth weeping, sowing a mere handful of seed with tears, through the mercy of Jehovah we come back to the homestead, bearing many sheaves, with songs of joy" (Ps. 136). That these words and the like were used by the faithful few we know, for God

kept a book of remembrance in which they were written, not only in heaven, but also on earth; and in the "Pilgrim's Psalm-book" we may read them to this day, knowing that they are the very words sung by the inspired poets of Malachi's time, and familiar on the lips of as many as feared Jehovah and hated evil.

**16.** They feared the Lord—that is the beginning of wisdom and the root of all religion; they revered the majesty of God, submitted to His authority. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant. They thought upon His Name; they seriously considered and frequently meditated upon the discoveries God has made of Himself in His Word and by His providences; and their meditation of Him is sweet to them and influences them. They thought on His Name; they consulted the honor of God and aimed at that as their ultimate end in all they did. Those that know the name of God should often think of and dwell upon it in their thoughts; it is a copious, curious subject, and frequent thoughts of it will contribute very much to our communion with God, and the stirring up of our devout affections to Him. They spake often one to another concerning the God they feared and that name of His which they thought so much of; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; and a good man out of a good treasure there will bring forth good things. They that feared the Lord kept together as those that were company for each other; they spake kindly and endearingly one to another for the preserving and promoting of mutual love, that that might not wax cold when iniquity did thus abound. They spake knowingly and edifyingly to one another, for the increasing and improving of faith and holiness; they spake one to another in the language of them that fear the Lord and think on His Name—the language of Canaan; when profaneness was come to so great a height as to trample upon all that is sacred, then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another. II.

There is no sweeter entertainment than for travellers to be remembering their country; their blessed home, and the happiness abiding them there, and refreshing and encouraging one another in the hopes of it; strengthening their hearts against all the hard encounters and difficulties in the way; often overlooking this moment, and helping each other to higher apprehensions of that vision of God which we ex-



pect. *Laighton*.—And how often has it happened that, when holding sacred converse with one another, Jesus Himself has joined them, as He did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus when they were conversing of the decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem? And though their eyes are let so that they do not see Him, yet their hearts burn within as He talks with them and opens to them the Scriptures, and they know that it has been the Lord. *M'Closh*.

We may sometimes be with Christians, the conversation apparently about God's Word or kingdom, and yet there may be no real ozone in the atmosphere, no converse of heart with heart, no nourishment and no refreshment. On the other hand, there may have been no "religious conversation," and yet the animating and restful influence of affection, friendship and the contact of minds living in the fear and light of God. This is a large subject, and yet one on which each one must find for himself what is right, safe and profitable. Only let us be sincere, and avoid all Pharisaism. The next best thing to grace is nature. Only let us be heavenly-minded and avoid worldliness. For, blessed be God, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. *A. Saphir*.

He kept an account of them; a book of remembrance was written before Him. It is an expression after the manner of men, intimating that their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance as punctually and particularly as if they were written in a book; as if journals were kept of all their conferences. Great kings had books of remembrance written and read before them, in which were entered all the services done them, when and by whom, as *Esth. 2:23*. God, in like manner, remembers the services of His people, that in the review of them He may say, "Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." God has a book for the sighs and tears of His mourners (*Ps. 56:8*), much more for the pleadings of His advocates. Never was any good word spoken of God or for God from an honest heart, but it was registered that it might be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, and in no wise lose its reward. *H*.

God hearkens and hears, records and remembers all that the righteous say. Every word of encouragement spoken to a weary fellow-toiler, every word of sympathy and comfort to an afflicted spirit, every word of quickening to diligence and activity in the Christian life, every kind, generous, loving word that has helped and cheered a struggling, tempted fel-

low soul, is heard, remembered and recorded, and one day shall be disclosed again to the mutual, grateful joy of the helper and the helped. So, too, every good word spoken in season to him who owns no Saviour, who has no hope, who is without God, and yet is journeying to an eternal world where trust and hope in a God and Saviour are the conditions of happy existence, every such word will be found on record too; it will contribute to the lasting joy of its utterer and of him that has heeded it. *B*.

From one cause or another we shrink from the responsibility of avowing our deepest convictions. Partly it is from the fear of ostentation and singularity, partly from self-distrust and sincere humility, partly from more unworthy motives. But from whatever cause it may be, by so doing we wrong our friends. We leave unspoken the word which might have cheered or guided or turned them. By our coldness we suffer them to remain in doubt whether God has visited us. If the heart be full, men argue, its feelings will find utterance. If the Christian creed be accepted as the truth, it cannot but color the whole life of the believer. Not to speak then of our highest hopes, not to talk, one with another, of what, as we trust, God has done and will do for us, is to cast discredit on our name. When that is at stake we may well forget ourselves. No one has ever ventured to cast aside his religious reserve without meeting with sympathy for which he had not looked, and gaining courage from the sense of spiritual fellowship. How can it be otherwise? It is not of ourselves we speak, but of God whom we have seen. It is not our own honor which we look for, but the glory of our Father which is in heaven. It is not of any special prerogative we make boast, but of a blessing which is offered as the common heritage of men: for Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. So may we all see Him as our Redeemer and our strength; so may we give Him glory; so may we confess Him before men! *Bp. Westcott*.

What a world would this become were all brought to do God's will! How would there be in each individual soul that fulness of joy which can flow only from thoughts and affections centred upon God, and a will conscious of acting ever in harmony with His will! How would there be perfect agreement among communities of men, that agreement which can only be where the wills of men are brought into union with one another by being in union with the one great Will! How would the glory of

God, the one great end of man's being on earth, abound, so that God, looking down on His obedient children, imaging His will on earth, might declare Himself well pleased with the children of men, and pour down on them His blessings with an unsparing hand! *Karslake.*

17. Those who thus thought on Jehovah should be thought of by Him, affirms the prophet. In the new day which He was about to create, the day of His coming, they should be a peculiar and choice possession to Him; on that day, while He punishes the ungodly, who distrust and condemn Him, He will spare the faithful even "as a father spareth the son who serves him," and has been true to his service in dark and perilous times. *Cor.*

All the goodness of the saints shall then be revealed by the Judge. Their greatest excellencies are invisible to the eyes of men; the sanctity of their aims and affections which gives life and value to all the acts of obedience; their secret duties, wherein the sincerity and ardeney of their souls is most expressed, are only known to God. And such is the excellent humility of the saints, that the more they are enriched and abound with the gracious influences of the spirit, the less they discover to the world; as the celestial bodies, when in nearest conjunction with the sun and most filled with his light, are least in appearance to the inhabitants of the earth. But there is a book of remembrance before Him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him. *Bates.*

When the "jewels" are "made up," He will pronounce, "they are Mine." What triumph to hear it! What congratulation with one another! What congratulation of the innumerable angelic "hosts;" for it is "the Lord of Hosts" that will say, "they are Mine!" And what a situation must that be—in place, and circumstances, and felicity, and glory—in which He will assign their abode within the immediate manifestation of His presence! He will also confer on them an inconceivably more glorious brightness, and beauty, and value, *as in themselves*, than they had on earth. And this to shine "as the stars, forever and ever." Looking at this prospect, which of us can be content that *his* soul should be wanting when "the Lord of Hosts" shall "make up His jewels"? Who can bear the thought of being cast among the oaser rejected things of the cre-

ation, and for Him to say, "that is *not Mine*—take it away"? *Foster.*

It is not too much to think that when God shall have made up all His jewels, and the number of the elect shall be complete, He will make it a part of their happiness to look back from the height of heaven upon all their winding track and to see that every step has been ordered in infinite love; that their sorest trials have been merciful; that their freest choices have been links in God's chain of purpose; that their very sins have been overruled for good. And if this shall appear amazing in the history of an individual, how shall it shine resplendent in the nations of them that are saved, when ten thousand times ten thousand intermingling and entangled lives shall visibly accord with one infinite plan, and centre in one sovereign purpose! The great end of creation and providence and grace is God's own glory. *J. W. Alexander.*

What a heaven will the true Christian have! Not only a heaven prepared for him, but a heaven within him, to meet the heaven above—a heaven of purity within, to meet the heaven of holiness without, and all of God as a security for its eternal duration. *R. Hill.*—Treasures in heaven are indefectible in their nature and endless in duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the orbs above, which shine with undiminished lustre and move with unweary motion. Nay, when these lights of heaven shall be put out, the righteous, being fixed in the Divine presence, shall enjoy one perpetual day—a day commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God Himself. *R. South.*

18. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between sinners and saints; between those that serve God and make conscience of their duty to Him and those that serve Him not, but put contempt upon His service. Ye that now speak against God as making no difference between good and bad, and therefore say, It is in vain to serve Him (verse 14), ye shall be made to see your error; ye that would speak for God, but know not what to say as to this, that there seems to be one event to the righteous and to the wicked and all things come alike to all, will then have the matter set in a true light, and will see to your everlasting satisfaction the difference between the righteous and the wicked. *H.*

*The reckoning day will shortly come!* Let the righteous return after a little space, and they will see a broad line of diverse destiny ranging "between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." *H. C.*

**Him that serveth God.** Do we not know that He who gave to the earth its richness, and who set the sun to shine in the heavens, and who gave to us that wonderful frame of body and mind, whose healthful workings are so delightful to us, that He gave them that we might use both body and mind in His service; that those faculties which we feel, as it were, burning within us, have their work before them, a work far above their strength, though multiplied a thousandfold; that the call to them to be busy is never silent; that there is an infinite voice in the infinite sins and sufferings of millions which proclaims that the contest is raging around us; that every idle moment is treason; that now it is the time for unceasing efforts; and that not till the victory is gained may Christ's soldiers throw aside their arms and resign themselves to enjoyment and to rest? *T. Arnold.*

**Chap. 4.** With no break in the continuous thought, this chapter proceeds to contrast the destiny of the wicked and of the righteous (verses 1-3); gives a general injunction to observe the law of Moses (verse 4), and a promise of John Baptist under the name of Elijah, with brief hints of the work he should do (verses 5, 6). II. C.

**1. For, behold, the day cometh.** The connection of these words with the preceding is so apparent, that there seems no reason why they should have been separated and made the beginning of a new chapter. The words themselves are an image or description of the final judgment on the Jews in their destruction, and an image or representation of the last general judgment on all mankind. The former was certainly then to come on the Jews, if not prevented by their repentance, as it was not; the latter is yet to come, but shall in God's appointed time as certainly come as if it were already present. Of both, therefore, it might then be said, "Behold, the day cometh"—that is, it shall certainly come; and the description is so full of terror, that it may be well applied both to one and to the other. The primary intention, however, of the prophet seems to have been to describe the judgment denounced upon the Jews, to whom he was peculiarly sent to reprove them for their sins, and to admonish them of the consequences of impenitence. *Poole.*

In my view, the primary reference must be to judgments on the wicked *in time*, providential inflictions, like that on Jerusalem by the Romans, like the still earlier judgments that fell on the ungodly portion of the Jews in the

fearful Syrian wars during the second century before Christ; indeed, embracing all those forms of special infliction which belong to God's providential government over nations and individuals too in the present world. All these are to be taken as prophecies and pledges of that far more terrific vengeance which shall come down on all the finally wicked in the world to come. I would not apply this passage to either this world or the next, to the entire exclusion of the other, but assume that it refers primarily to judgments in this world; then as a type, a harbinger, prophecy, and pledge, it embraces also those heavier, sorer judgments which execute full and unmitigated justice on the ungodly in the world to come. II. C.

**2. The Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.** The Messiah is called here "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings," to signify that His light clears up men's understandings and chases away the darkness of their minds, and that His rays and kindly warmth will heal all the diseases of their souls. *W. Louth.*

This is the joyous, far different lot of the righteous. The fears of God's name are in strong contrast of character as well as destiny with the proud blasphemers. The rising sun is a glowing and glorious image of hope and joy. "Righteousness" has here the not uncommon sense of deliverance, salvation, blessedness, with no implication of its being strictly *deserved* on the score of simple justice, and by no means excluding mercy. The reference is mainly to the Messiah as the great fountain of light, peace and joy to the saints of God. His wings are the beams of His light. II. C.

Outward riches are but a shadow of the unsearchable riches of Christ; outward life is but a shadow of Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life; outward liberty is but a shadow of that freedom that is to be had in Christ; "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed" (John 8:36), importing that no freedom is freedom indeed and in truth but this; outward rest is but a shadow of the rest that is to be had in Him. "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The sun in the firmament is but a shadow of the Sun of Righteousness and of His glory; roses and lilies are but shadows of His beauty, who is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley; rivers and fountains are but shadows of His fulness, who is the fountain of living waters; not a fountain closed, but a fountain opened to us; plants and trees are

but a shadow of the verdure of Him who is the plant of renown, the tree of life. All things that have an excellency in them are but shadows of Him in whom excellencies do concentrate. All the stars of creature-excellencies are but shadows of Him who is the bright and morning Star. *Ralph Erskine.*

With what other testimony is the whole of Scripture charged but that of Christ, Christ, Christ? Christ, in the typical histories of the Old Testament. Christ, in the typical ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. Christ, in the Psalms, as the source of the Christian's consolation, and the key to unlock all the affections of his heart. Christ, in the prophecies, as Captain of the great triumph over evil—predicted with greater clearness as time wears on. Christ, in the Gospels, as the Healer and Benefactor of the race. Christ, in the Epistles, as the Wisdom of God. Christ, in the Revelation, as the Coming One, whose advent is ever imminent, the pole-star of hope, upon which the Christian's eye is ever fixed. The Scriptures are, indeed, full of Christ, and we have His own testimony that we shall read them amiss and discuss them amiss unless our study and our discussion lead us to find Him in them. *E. M. G.*

**4-6.** *The final admonition.* The closing verses of Malachi are also the closing verses of the Old Testament. As his voice, so also the Voice of Inspiration dies away, and will be heard no more for four hundred years. It was but meet that a revelation so noble as that contained in the Old Testament Scriptures should rise to a high and stately close. And what close could be more lofty than the passage before us? It is a true Mount of Vision on which the prophet stands; and as he looks across the valley at his feet, peering into the years to be, there rises before him the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses, Elijah and Christ conferring together on its summit concerning the things which pertain to the kingdom of God: "Remember the law of Moses;" "Behold, I send Elijah;" "Jehovah cometh."

In the previous section of his prophecy, Malachi had predicted the coming of the Lord, of *Adonai*, the present and active Ruler of men (chap. 3:1). The day of His coming would be a day of blended mercy and judgment, burning like a furnace for the wicked, shining like a quickening healing sun on the righteous. Who could endure the day of His coming or stand when He appeared? Only those who remembered and kept the law of God, who were living in the obedience of faith. Therefore the

prophet exhorts the men of his time, as they would escape the curse, to bear the law in mind, and, as they would secure the blessing, to walk in the statutes and judgments given to Moses in charge for all Israel on Horeb. The very form of his exhortation lends new force, for he so frames it as to bring out the Divine origin and authority of the law. Moses indeed spake the words of this law on Mount Horeb; but Moses, says Jehovah, was "My servant," or minister, and only delivered the statutes and judgments which "I gave him in charge" and gave him in charge "for all Israel"—not only for the men who heard his voice, but for all their succeeding generations. Thus, by a single stroke, the prophet reminds the men of his own time that the Divine law was binding on them no less than on their fathers, and that it *was* Divine; he eliminates from it all that was merely human and temporary; Moses was only the channel, God was the source from which the law came; Moses uttered, but God gave the law, revealing in it His eternal will and goodwill. *Cor.*

**4.** *Remember ye the law of Moses.* Ye are not to expect any prophets, for the time to come till the forerunner of the Messiah appears; so your chief care must be to attend to the instructions which Moses has given in his law, the most solemn part of which was delivered to him in an audible manner upon Mount Horeb (Ex. 19:9; De. 4:10). This your lawgiver plainly speaks of the Messiah, and instructs you to expect His coming and to obey His commands (De. 18:15). *W. Loeth.*

With reference to the law, the last chapter of the latest prophet closes with the admonition, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments;" and in all the later books this is conspicuously the case. The law of Moses is regarded as a Divine legacy at once inviolate and inviolable. It is certain that at that period those who wrote in such a way could have been conscious of no substantial alteration in books which for long ages had been so esteemed. *Leathes.*—If there was any truth in the critical hypothesis that the Pentateuch was written by Ezra, how absurd it would be for Malachi, who as a contemporary must have known all about its recent origin, to speak of it as he does in this verse! *W. H. G.*

Observe here, 1. The honorable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer of the Old Testament, in Malachi, the last writer. God by him calls him Moses My servant; for the

righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. See how the penmen of Scripture, though they lived in several ages at a great distance from each other (it was above twelve hundred years from Moses to Malachi), all concurred in the same thing, and supported one another, being all actuated and guided by one and the same Spirit. 2. The honorable mention that is made of the law of Moses; it was what God Himself commanded, He owns it for His law, and He commanded it for all Israel, as the municipal law of their kingdom. Thus will God magnify His law, and make it honorable. We are therefore concerned to keep the law, because God has commanded it, and commanded it for us, for we are the spiritual Israel; and if we expect the benefit of the covenant with Israel (Heb. 8:10), we must observe the commands given to Israel, those of them that were intended to be of perpetual obligation. 3. The summary of our duty, with reference to the law; we must remember it. Forgetfulness of the law is at the bottom of all our transgressions of it; if we would rightly remember it, we could not but conform to it; we should remember it when we have occasion to use it; remember both the commands themselves and the sanctions wherewith they are enforced. The office of conscience is to bid us remember the law.

Prophecy was now to cease in the Church for some ages, and the Spirit of prophecy not to return till the beginning of the Gospel, and now they are bid to remember the law of Moses; let them live by the rules of the latter, and live upon the promises of the former. We need not complain for want of visions and revelations, as long as we have the written word and the canon of Scripture complete to be our guide; for that is the most sure word of prophecy, and the touchstone by which we are to try the spirits. Though we have not prophets, yet, as long as we have Bibles, we may keep our communion with God, and keep ourselves in His way. II.

5, 6. These are the last words of the Old Testament, there uttered by a prophet, here expounded by an angel; there concluding the law, and here beginning the Gospel. "Behold," saith Malachi, "I will send you Elijah, the prophet;" and "he," saith the angel, "shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias." "And He shall turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children," saith the one; and "'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," saith the other. Thus sweetly and nearly do the two Testaments join together,

and thus divinely do they kiss each other, like the two cherubim in the temple oracle, as with their outward wings they touch the two sides of the house, from "In the beginning" to "Come, Lord Jesus," so with their inner they touch each other, the end of the law with the beginning of the Gospel. *Dr. Lightfoot.*

5. *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet.* The same person who is called the "messenger" or forerunner of the Messiah (chap. 3:1). It was the unanimous sense of the Jews, that "Elias should first come and restore all things" (Mark 9:12; John 1:21). This they understood of the coming of Elias in person. (See Eccles. 48:10). Our Saviour has interpreted this Elias to be John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14; 17:12, 13). *W. Louth.*—This prophecy was to receive its fulfilment in the person of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah. This meaning of the passage was confirmed by our Lord on two several occasions. B. C.

John Baptist was the Elias that was to come (Matt. 17:10-13, and very expressly Matt. 11:14). This is Elias which was to come; and verse 10, the same of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger (chap. 3:1). Elijah was a man of great austerity and mortification, zealous for God, bold in reproving sin, and active to reduce an apostate people to God and their duty; John Baptist was animated by the same spirit and power, and preached repentance and reformation, as Elias had done; and all held him for a prophet, as they did Elijah in his day, and that his baptism was from heaven and not of men. When God has such work to do as was formerly to be done, He can raise up such men to do it as He formerly raised up, and can put into a John Baptist the spirit of an Elias. II.

The Gospels hardly record a single sentence or figure of speech employed by John the Baptist, the germ of which may not be found in the prophecy of Malachi the messenger. So that he who really "searches" the Scriptures with fidelity and patience, whatever sceptical prepossessions he may bring to the quest, is more and more impressed with the sense of a vital unity in them which can only be accounted for by the guiding and controlling inspiration of one and the self-same Spirit. *Cox.*

The Baptist was the only second Elijah promised to the Church, and we do not look for another. Why, indeed, should another come? He would have no work to do. When the day of final judgment arrives men will be divided into the two great classes in which

they have chosen their respective places—the believing, waiting Church upon the one hand, the unbelieving world that has steeled itself against Christ, upon the other. The former need no Elijah-work. The latter would not profit from it. No time of new probation then begins, but only the full and perfect manifestation of a probation ended. Even now the course of time is running on lines which do not change, which only reach their terminal issues in the world's great assize: "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him do righteousness still, and he that is holy let him be made holy still" (Rev. 22: 11). *W. Milligan.*

*The great and dreadful day of the Lord.* The Messiah is by this prophet contemplated chiefly as a judge, the day of the Lord is regarded as beginning with His first advent, since His work of judgment really began then, and is carried forward through its various phases and successive steps, until its final consummation is reached in the awful terrors of the last great day. Moses and Elijah, who are here joined together in contiguous verses, as representing severally the law and the prophets, which testified alike of Christ's advent and sufferings, appeared in glory with the Redeemer on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9: 30, 31), bearing to Him the homage and the witness of the Old Testament, in which they are the most prominent figures. It is after them that the description of the two witnesses of the book of the Revelation (Rev. 11: 3) is evidently modelled (see verses 5, 6), which has led some to the opinion that this prophecy of Malachi is to have an additional fulfilment prior to Christ's second advent. *W. H. G.*

To warn in mercy before He smites in judgment, is evermore the order of God's throne. Hence the second Elijah should come before the Jewish people and polity should be smitten down by the terrible Roman arms. They were fearfully corrupt already. It was foreseen that they would become yet more so before and during the Messiah's incarnation. Hence the last warnings of the Baptist came in the hour of their greatest moral extremity.

6. How often do we see the hearts of parents borne down with almost crushing solicitude in the tenderness of their love for the souls of their children! What but this turning of the hearts of parents to their children begets such agonizing prayer of Christian parents for ungodly children, and of converted children for yet unconverted parents? Hence it was the

Spirit of the Lord that moved this prophet to touch by one master-stroke the central influence of John Baptist's preaching. When the men whom he called so mightily to repentance had bowed their hearts to this high behest, their next thought was that of renewed care and love for their children. If we had been present in that revival, we should have found it by no means unlike all the true revivals of our day in this one most precious feature. Such a revival of the home and household affections is eminently pleasing to God. In such a soil religion thrives. Where the hearts of fathers turn with loving, tender interest toward their children, and the hearts of children in like manner to their fathers, the Saviour finds a congenial home and takes up His abode. It seems to be implied that if John's preaching had altogether failed of this result, the gospel of salvation from the lips of Jesus might have fallen powerless upon the world, and left to Judea and to the nations of the earth only the remediless "curse." How forcibly, then, comes the appeal to us to cherish the tenderness of mutual love and earnest care for others' souls, especially within the dear circle of family relationships, lest the Gospel should fail to bless us, and lest we doom ourselves and those we ought to love to a moral ruin for which God has no remedy! Thus close the admonitions of the last prophet of the Old Testament age, and with them the volume of Scripture as it stood till in the fulness of time the Messiah came. *H. C.*

The Old Testament closes with a *cherem* or curse; and the omen has been fulfilled. In vain came the law by Moses; the Messenger was sent in vain; in vain did the Lord Himself come to His temple. Israel would not hearken, repent, obey. And she was proscribed. The doom was pronounced, the interdiction felt. Her land was smitten with desolation; and, to this day, all her pleasant places lie waste. Her children were driven forth to wander, smitten and afflicted, through the earth, aliens in every land; and, to this day, they stand before us a monument of the wrath of God against sin. The Jews are to Christendom what the cities of the plain were to the Jews. The curses with which they drove their Lord and Christ to the cross have in very deed come home to roost; and they who would not accept the salvation of God have long been "scattered and peeled" by His judgments. The fair olive and stately palm of Israel have been stabbed and rent and scathed as by stroke after stroke of angry lightnings; all the bolts of heaven

having fallen on them, hurling the blackened splinters to the very ends of the world, to bear witness in all lands that there is a God who judgeth in the earth. *Cox.*

With Malachi prophecy ceased, and Israel was left to herself four hundred years. But at last, immediately before the fulfilment of the Messianic promises, the whole old dispensation appears summed up and embodied once more in the greatest of them that are born of women; in one, who went before the Lord, like the aurora before the sun, till, in unrivalled humility, he disappeared in its splendor. John the Baptist, by his earnest preaching of repentance, his abode in the wilderness and his ascetic life, personified the *law*; while, at the same time, pointing to Him, for whom he was not worthy to do the most menial office, who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, to the Lamb of God, which bears the sins of the world, he also embodied the cheering word of *promise*. *Schuff.*

This last of the mighty line of prophets gives strong utterance to the "hope of Israel"! One clear voice, coming from we scarcely know what lips, proclaims for the last time, "He comes! He comes!" and then all is silence for four hundred years. Here is the concentration, in this last prophetic utterance, of that element of forward-looking expectance which marked all the earlier revelation. From the beginning the selectest spirits in Israel had set their faces and pointed their fingers to a great future, which gathered distinctness as the ages rolled, and culminated in the king from David's line, of whom many psalms sung, and in the suffering servant of the Lord, who shines out from the pages of the second part of Isaiah's prophecy. This Messianic hope runs through all the Old Testament, like a broadening river. "They that went before cried, Hosanna; blessed is He that cometh." That hope gives unity to the Old Testament, whatever criticism may have to teach about the process of its production. The most important thing about the book is that one purpose informs it all; and the student who misses the truth that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" has a less accurate conception of the meaning and inter-relations of the Old Testament than the unlearned who has accepted that great truth. We should be willing to learn all that modern scholarship has to teach about the course of revelation. But we should take care that the new knowledge does not darken the old certainty that the prophets

"testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that should follow." Here, at the very end, stands Malachi, reiterating the assurance which had come down through the centuries. *A. M.*

In the interval between the closing of the Old Testament and the destruction of Jerusalem *One appeared in whom centred every line of history and of prophecy*. He led a life, as man, in which the most daring gainsayer cannot suggest a flaw. He also claimed to come as fulfilling the older Revelation, and Himself foretold the downfall of the earthly Jerusalem, since the purpose of its separation from the world had been accomplished. He, in fact, commenced by the foundation of the Christian Church a new kingdom, in which the promised King should reign, "to whom it was a light thing that the Jews should be saved," since to Him all the Gentiles also were to be given. *Such an One rose from the grave after having to the letter accomplished, both in life and death, all that prophecy had foretold of His earthly career*, and then sent down the long-promised gift of the Holy Spirit, the inward teacher of the heart, the builder of that spiritual temple which was to supersede the material edifice on Mount Moriah; and such temple (though, alas! too slowly and imperfectly) is gradually rising throughout the civilized world, to the honor and glory of the Triune Jehovah. Surely this continuity of events establishes that the written word has its outward counterpart, that the Old Testament is but the germ of the New, and the one is connected with the other as indissolubly as the Word of God made flesh is forever united to the nature of regenerated man. *Lord Hatherly.*

Since the Old Testament has so many and such vital connections with the New—connections which enter into the very substance of both; since its whole scope and aim is to prepare the way for the Messiah, to adumbrate His offices, and to educate the covenant people for His coming, we need not wonder at the constant appeals which the Saviour and His apostles make to its pages. It is throughout a perpetual prophecy of the Gospel, and so they manifestly regard it. *E. P. Barrows.*

The Bible reveals God's purpose to form a spiritual kingdom in the world, submissive to His government, obedient to His law, and to gather the members and the citizens of this kingdom out of all countries and peoples of the earth—a conception that was not possible to either Greek or Egyptian, and that certainly was not more possible to the Jew, except as he

was enlightened concerning it by that Divine mind which was operating upon him through its ministers and messages. It reveals at length the Head of this kingdom, personal and transcendent, unique and supreme in both character and power. At first, foreshadowed from the distance and darkness of remote ages, He is more and more distinctly brought to view, through continually increasing radiance of prophecy; through the voices of psalmists, through the solemn and significant ritual of the temple, through the office of the priesthood, through the royal majesty and supremacy of kings. More and more definite become the prophecies concerning Him. First, He is the seed of the woman; then He is of the seed of Abraham; then He is the descendant of Jacob; then He is of the tribe of Judah; then He is the son of David; until prophecy begins to focus itself at last upon the very time when He shall appear, as in Daniel, upon the very place where He is to appear, as in Isaiah and Micah, upon the very office and character which He is to fulfil and to exhibit; till the Old Testament closes, with the latest voice of its prophecy, through Malachi, predicting the rising of this Sun of Righteousness, predicting the sudden coming of this Lord, preceded by the prophet who is to prepare the way before Him. The long series of prophecies closes here; and we are left, looking on to the histories—if such there shall be—in which these predictions shall be fulfilled.

Then comes a gap of time, but not an inter-

ruption in the sequence of thought, extending over four hundred years, and the New Testament takes up its office of Divine instruction. It presents to us this King, who has been foreshadowed from the beginning of human history, in a constantly brightening clearness of prediction. He now comes into the world, welcomed by the angelic song, yet coming as a babe in Bethlehem; growing then into maturity; accomplishing then His works of wonder, scattering miracles around His path, speaking divinest thoughts to men in human utterance, expressing before them the absolute beauty of love in life, fulfilling at last His office of priest through His sacrifice of Himself, then arising from the dead, and ascending into heaven, King of the saints, predestined and glorious King of the world.

It shows the Spirit who comes afterward to represent this King in the world, and to testify of Him through all ages. It conveys to us the instructions of the apostles, inspired by that Spirit to testify of Christ; instructions in truth, and in practical duty, which are to continue the law of the members of this spiritual kingdom, while they and it continue to exist. And finally it gives us the prophetic vision of the amazing closing book, the Book of the Revelation, in which is shown the consummation of this kingdom, with the crash of conflict in air and earth, the tumultuous collisions and overthrow of nations, through which it marches to its ultimate assured universality in the world.

*R. S. Storrs.*



# AUTHORS CITED AND KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS.

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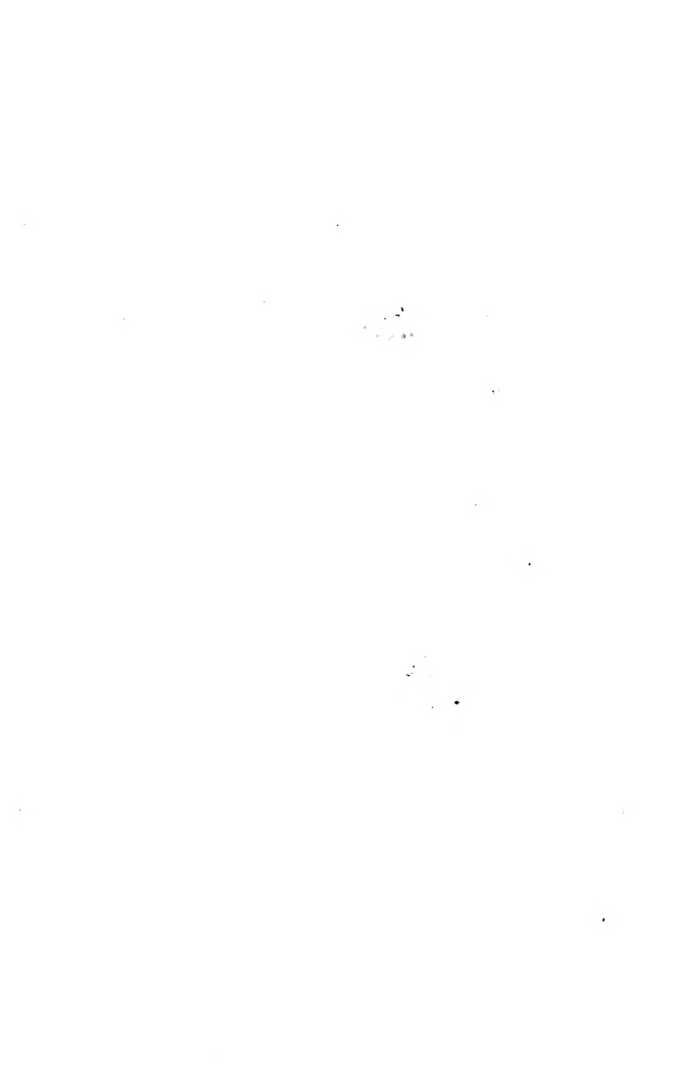






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